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THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISRUPTION OF THE KINGDOM.

1. ITS REMOTE CAUSES. The revolt of the ten tribes took place, according to the common chronology, in the year 975 B.C. Its seeds, however, had been sown at an early period, in the mutual jealousies of certain tribes. Ephraim had envied Judah, and Judah had vexed Ephraim. Judah was the more numerous tribe, and had the larger inheritance. But Ephraim had advantages of its own. It enjoyed the more choice and central position. It had also the honour of great names. Joshua, who had led the people into the land of promise, sprang from Ephraim. Samuel was a native of Mount Ephraim. For three centuries and a half, too, the national sanctuary had been at Shiloh, within the confines of that tribe. And the men of that tribe had highly distinguished themselves in the war with Midian, securing the fords of Jordan and beheading the two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb. Nor were the Ephraimites slow to advance their claims. And though their proud self-assertion was severely chastised by Jephthah, the embers of strife between them and the men of Judah continued to smoulder. Till David's accession the superiority inclined to Ephraim. But under David and Solomon the scale was turned. When Jerusalem was made the ecclesiastical centre in place of Shiloh, and the civil capital in place of Shechem, the rivalry became keener. During the latter part of Solomon's

reign, the feeling, which had been kept in check for a time, was stimulated by the oppressive taxation, the forced labour, and the enormous burdens which he imposed upon the people in the provinces. So matters hastened to a crisis.

2. IMMEDIATE OCCASION (1 Kings xii. 1-20). Matters were ripe for a revolt when Rehoboam was about to ascend the throne at Shechem,^a in the Ephraimite territory, the selection of which may have been an attempt at conciliation on Rehoboam's part.^b His inauguration was seized on as the fit occasion. Representatives of the people, with Jeroboam at their head, came demanding a remission of the heavy imposts under which they

^a Shechem had been an ancient gathering-place of the tribes and a centre of union from the time of Joshua. Abimelech made it his royal residence during his usurped reign of three years; and though afterwards destroyed by him, it appears soon to have been restored.

Besides its central position, Shechem could be conveniently reached by the trans-Jordanic tribes, by means of the Jordan fords not far distant. The situation of Shechem is extremely beautiful. At the end of the narrow valley between Ebal and Gerizzim, nestling at the base of the latter, and partly overhung by its precipices, stood the ancient city; while the verdure of the valley, the foliage of the trees—the slender vine, the broad-leaved fig, the snowy flowers of the olive—the abundant springs of delicious water, and the numerous gardens, make it one of the most delightful spots in Palestine.

^b A different cause for the choice of Shechem as the place of Rehoboam's inauguration or coronation, is given by a distinguished Hebrew commentator. He affirms that as Shechem belonged to Ephraim, and as Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, and as, moreover, the prediction of Ahijah the Shilonite, the prophet at this period of the northern kingdom, it was the partisans of Jeroboam that pitched on that place, in order to make sure of being in the best position for elevating their compatriot to the throne. It may farther be noted that a very slight emendation of the original, and an emendation favoured by the three oldest versions, brings the 2nd verse of the 12th chapter of 1 Kings into harmony with 2 Chron. x. 2. The verse in question would then read, "And it came to pass, when Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, whither he had fled from King Solomon, heard," not of the meeting at Shechem, but of the death of Solomon, "that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt." Farther, a comparison of the 3rd verse with the 20th of the same chapter, makes it clear that the persons who, as we read in the former verse, "sent and called him," were merely the members of the Shechemite assembly, in order to appoint him their spokesman with Rehoboam; while the persons who "sent and called him," according to the statement of the latter verse, were all Israel, for the purpose of making him king.

were groaning. The haughty Rehoboam, rejecting the counsel of the seniors, who urged him to humour the people so far as to yield to them for once, and acting on the advice of the young men, refused the application with threats of yet greater exactions.^a The old revolutionary cry of Sheba, "To your tents, O Israel," was raised, and the disruption became an accomplished fact. Adoram, as being well acquainted with the people's grievances, was sent with proposals of redress. But he was stoned to death.

3. COMPARISON OF THE TWO KINGDOMS.

The northern kingdom, known as that of Samaria, Ephraim, or Israel, greatly surpassed the southern in population and extent of territory. Its fertile soil and fresh and lovely scenery also contrasted favourably with the more sober pasture and corn-land of the south. It contained, too, many places of great importance. The schools of the prophets were there—Ramah, Bethel, and Gilgal. The principal scenes of prophetic activity were there. Iddo, Amos (though from Tekoa in Judah), Micaiah, Jonah, Hosea, Elijah, and Elisha all ministered there. In a military point of view it was also superior, with its cavalry organised in two divisions, its army well officered, and its great skill in archery (Psalm lxxviii. 9). But, on the other hand, Judah was comparatively free from some grave drawbacks under which Israel laboured, such as the stigma of rebellion and the evil repute of open defection from the national worship, which drove numbers of priests, Levites, and the religiously disposed to transfer their interest to Jerusalem and Judah (2 Chron. xi. 13-16). The northern sovereigns also were inferior, on the whole, to those of Judah. Of most of the former it is written, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, who made Israel to

^a The term *scorpions* (1 Kings xii. 11) is taken by some as a strong figure of speech, by others as referring to the prickly scorpion-plant which inflicted sharp wounds, by others still to a particular kind of whip furnished with iron points and hooks.

sin ;” while the latter reckoned in their number men more or less distinguished for piety, as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, the repentant Manasseh, and the consistent Josiah. It is not strange, therefore, that the kingdom of Judah should have survived that of Israel about 130 years ; or that during the two centuries and a half from the Disruption to the Captivity there should have been no less than nine changes of dynasty and nineteen kings in Israel, while in Judah there were only twelve kings and no change of dynasty. The frequent alteration of capital, too, (Shechem rebuilt by Jeroboam, Tirzah to which he removed, Jezreel chosen by Ahab, Samaria built by Omri, being severally so honoured), tended to weaken the sense of unity and stability in the northern kingdom. Judah had indeed a narrower sea-board, but it was less exposed to foreign invasion, and above all had the great advantage of possessing the capital of the Davidic line. If the north had the superiority in area, physical outline, and material resources, the south possessed more of the elements of moral strength and religious unity. The two kingdoms thus situated were obviously exposed to danger from the first. Not only had they internal elements of disintegration, but they were comparatively small. The area of both together was rather under 13,000 square miles, and thus not quite equal to that of Holland, or to the six northern counties of England. The population, too, if we reckon three millions and a half for Israel, and a million and three quarters for Judah, did not exceed five millions and a quarter, only a trifle over that of Ireland, according to the present census. And their situation on the highway between the most powerful empires of ancient times—Egypt on the south, and the great monarchies of Assyria and Babylon to the eastward (not to speak of Syria on the north)—made them now the bone of contention between rival states, and again the battle-ground on which they contended.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Show that tribal jealousy was the remote cause of the Disruption.*
2. *What fomented the hostile feeling?*
3. *The term "scorpions" in Rehoboam's reply has been variously explained.*
4. *State and explain the names by which the northern kingdom was known.*
5. *In what respects had it the superiority?*
6. *Specify the countervailing advantages of the southern kingdom.*

CHAPTER II.

THE REIGN OF REHOBAM AND THAT OF HIS SON ABIJAH.

4. REHOBAM'S FIRST MEASURES (1 Kings xii. 21-24 ; 2 Chron. xi. 1-17). When the revolt took place, Rehoboam at once raised a formidable force of 180,000 men, with the view of quelling it. But Shemaiah, the prophet of Judah at the time, and styled "the man of God" (an expression frequent in Kings, but seldom found elsewhere), forbade the enterprise. Thus arrested, Rehoboam set about securing what he still retained. He strengthened his kingdom, however, not so much on the northern frontier against Israel, as by a line of fortresses to the south and west against the more powerful monarchy of Egypt. And in these he settled his sons.

5. SHISHAK'S INVASION (1 Kings xiv. 25-28 ; 2 Chron. xii. 1-12). Early in the reign of Rehoboam, the Jews and the Egyptians came into collision.

During the previous reign, the two kingdoms had been on friendly terms, which were strengthened by the marriage affinity between Solomon and the daughter of Pharaoh. We do not know what brought about the change, whether it was the accession of a new Egyptian dynasty (the twenty-second), or the intrigues of Jeroboam, or what else. One thing is certain, that Shishak, that is, Sheshonk I., the first Pharaoh of Egypt certainly identified, invaded Judea in the fifth year of Rehoboam, with an army-made up of Egyptians, Lydians from the west, Sukkiims (these being either Arabs or cave-dwellers) from the east, and Ethiopians from the south—a formidable force of 1200 chariots, 60,000 cavalry, and infantry almost without number. Shishak entered Jerusalem, and this was the first capture of the Holy City. He plundered the house of the Lord and the king's house, carried away with other treasures the shields of gold which Solomon had made, and reduced the people to vassalage. Special interest attaches to this campaign through the confirmation it receives from an inscription on the walls of the great temple of Karnak, where in the proud enumeration of Shishak's conquests are found words recording his successful invasion of Palestine, and sculptured figures of captives with unmistakably Jewish features.

6. REST OF REHOBOAM'S REIGN (1 Kings xiv. 29-31 ; 2 Chron. xi. 13-23 ; xii. 13-16). Few events of importance signalised the rest of Rehoboam's reign. The enmity between the rival kingdoms showed itself in petty raids. Their rivalry at the same time took a still more unhappy form. "They also," it is said of Judah, "built them high places, and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree." In the beginning of his reign Rehoboam had dealt wisely. At a later period he forsook the law of the Lord. Three years after he ascended the throne, a general declension took place. But the Egyptian invasion served as a salutary

chastisement, and both sovereign and subjects humbled themselves. Rehoboam's main defect, however, was his lack of consistency of purpose. "He prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." Yet on his repentance "the wrath of the Lord turned from him," and the covenant mercies of David were not denied to him. "He slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead." The prophets of Judah in this reign were Shemaiah and Iddo.^a

7. THE REIGN OF ABIJAH, SON AND SUCCESSOR OF REHOBAM (1 Kings xv. 1-8; 2 Chron. xiii.). Being the son of Rehoboam by Maacah or Micaiah, daughter of Uriel and Tamar, a daughter of Absalom, Abijah was a lineal descendant of David on both the father's side and the mother's. A longer form of his name is Abijahu. It was also changed to Abijam, as we have it in Kings. Such changes of name were common in Old Testament times, as we see from the cases of Abram, Jacob, Bethel, and many more. Though Rehoboam had been forbidden to go to war for the recovery of the revolted tribes, Abijam had no such prohibition to deter him.^b The opposing armies soon met at Mount Zemaraim, south of Bethel, *Beitin*, in the range of Ephraim, and near the confines of

^a From 1 Kings xiv. 21, and 2 Chron. xii. 13, we learn that Rehoboam "reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem," and that he was "forty and one years old when he began to reign." This has been supposed to be inconsistent with the statement made in 2 Chron. xiii. 7, and the old Greek version inserts after 1 Kings xii. 24, an addition to the Hebrew text, representing him as sixteen years when he came to the throne. But the terms "young" and "tender hearted" (in 2 Chron. xiii. 7) may refer not to his age but to his want of experience and decision of purpose, meaning "young to his work" and "deficient in spirit." Some, however, maintain that the number forty-one is a copyist's error for twenty-one, an ill-formed or faded limb of one of the letters used as numerals making this difference in the statement of years.

^b In the brief narrative of Abijam in Kings, it has appeared strange to some that the war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam should be referred to. Some have supposed that the name Rehoboam must be altered to that of Abijam. But this is quite unwarranted, for the notice in the 6th verse of chap. xv. shows that he inherited the war from his father, while in the 7th verse the war between Abijam himself and Jeroboam is plainly stated.

the two kingdoms. The forces of Abijam were posted on the mountain, and those of Jeroboam at its base. Speaking as the champion of his people, Abijam charged Jeroboam with rebellion, and Israel with abetting him, and both prince and people with breaking the covenant—a covenant of salt or perpetual covenant, by which God gave the kingdom of Israel to David and his sons. He upbraided them with the gross idolatry of the golden calves, which Jeroboam made them for gods, with the setting aside of the Aaronic priests and ministering Levites, and the institution of a spurious and contemptible order. He reminded them that in Judah the pure worship of Jehovah was maintained, and that God, therefore, would be on the side of Judah. But while Abijam was speaking, Jeroboam and his army had been acting. They had drawn an ambuscade round the men of Judah, and had beset them behind and before. In this perilous position the men of Judah had recourse to prayer. In faith that their prayers would be heard, the priests sounded with the trumpets, and the soldiers gave a shout like that at Jericho of old. The result was a decisive victory, spite of Jeroboam's superior numbers and generalship. There fell down slain of Israel 500,000 men. Abijam followed up this great success, pursuing the fugitive Jeroboam and his shattered host, and capturing Bethel, Jeshonah, and Ephraim, with their townships. Jeroboam was completely crippled, and did not venture to renew the war all the days of Abijam. Of Abijam himself, however, it is said that "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father" (1 Kings xv. 3). His apparent zeal did not keep him from walking in Rehoboam's evil way, and after a reign of three years he died.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *In what direction did Rehoboam strengthen his kingdom?*
2. *Describe fully Shishak's invasion.*
3. *Why does special interest attach to it?*
4. *What salutary effect did the Egyptian invasion produce?*
5. *Where did the armies of Jeroboam and Abijah meet?*
6. *What charges did Abijah prefer against Jeroboam and Israel?*
7. *To what expedient did the men of Judah resort?*
8. *The victory was gained in a manner similar to one won at an early period of Jewish history.*

CHAPTER III.

THE REIGN OF ASA.

8. HIS CHARACTER AND HIS ZEAL FOR REFORM (1 Kings xv. 9-16 ; 2 Chron. xiv. 1-5, 16-17). Asa, the third king of Judah, is thus commended:—"He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father ;" "His heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." His career was a very long and fairly prosperous one. For one and forty years he ruled wisely. This better period of his reign commenced with the close of Jeroboam's reign, ended with the beginning of Ahab's, and covered the reigns of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri in the north. He took at once the attitude of a reformer, rooting out abominations that had grown up before his time, and proving himself the uncompromising enemy of idolatry. He did not spare even his grandmother Maacah. She had made a "horror" or hideous image for the idolatrous worship of

Ashtoreth, the Phœnician Venus. But he deposed her from the rank of queen-mother, cut down her idol, stamped it and burnt it, strewing its ashes on the Kidron. He made vigorous efforts also to take away the high-places or hill-sanctuaries, which, though not for idol worship, and resorted to under special circumstances as by Samuel (1 Samuel ix. 12-14), now interfered with the privileges pertaining to the sanctuary at Jerusalem. From whatever cause, however, enough of them remained to exercise the activity of Jehoshaphat and subsequently of Josiah in their removal.

9. TIME OF PEACE (2 Chron. xiv. 6-8). During ten years Asa reaped the fruits of Abijam's victory over Jeroboam and of his own wise conduct; for we read that "the land was quiet ten years," and further that "the land had rest, and he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest." That hostilities of a petty kind, however, did continue on the border of the two kingdoms may be inferred from the statement that "there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days." Like a wise man, too, in this comparatively peaceful time he prepared for war. He fortified his territory with walls and towers, gates and bars. He built fenced cities. He raised his army to a war footing, amounting to 300,000 spearmen in Judah, and 280,000 bowmen in Benjamin."

10. CUSHITE WAR (2 Chron. xiv. 9-15). But a war of great magnitude now broke out. Zerah, a Cushite (either an Ethiopian as the term generally signifies, or an Egyptian), led against Judah the largest army of which Scripture contains any account. This enormous force, made up mainly of Ethiopians, and said to amount to a million men and three hundred war chariots, reminds one of the multitudes led by Artaxerxes against the younger Cyrus, by Darius to Arbela, or by Xerxes against Greece. With this Zerah advanced to Mareshah in the lowland (after-

wards called Maresa, now Merash, and famous in the wars of the Maccabees), and invaded Asa's kingdom. In this emergency Asa's unfaltering trust in God expressed itself in the beautiful prayer which he is recorded to have offered before the engagement. The battle was joined in the valley of Zephathah, near Mareshah, in the south-west of Judah, and the Lord gave His people the victory. The Ethiopians broke and fled. The battle turned into a rout, and Asa and his men pursued the Ethiopians as far as Gerar, some twenty miles from the field of battle on the way toward Egypt. This great victory, which secured Judah from invasion by Egypt for upwards of three centuries, is all the more remarkable as being the only occasion on which the Hebrews met and conquered the forces of Egypt or Assyria in the open field. Once again they did thus face the foe when led by Josiah against Necho ; but the result was a crushing defeat.

11. AZARIAH'S ADDRESS: ASA'S COVENANT (2 Chron. xv. 1-15). As Asa and his army were returning flushed with victory, they were met by the prophet Azariah, the son of Oded, who went forth to congratulate them on their triumph. But Azariah had also a further object in view. He rehearsed the past in a noble address which was meant to rouse them to a sense of their high destiny, to remind them of the bitter fruits of previous departures from God his law and his worship, and to exhort them to perseverance in attachment to Jehovah for the future. These admonitions were not lost. Encouraged by them Asa prosecuted with still greater vigour the work of reformation, rooting out idolatry and restoring the altar of burnt-offering that stood before the porch of the Lord. He also convened a great assembly at Jerusalem, to which he gathered not only Judah and Benjamin, but many devout persons out of Ephraim and Manasseh and Simeon, who flocked to him out of Israel "when they saw that the Lord his God was with him." This took place in the

fifteenth year of Asa's reign, in the 3rd month, about the season of Pentecost. It was the first renewal of the national covenant on record; the next occurred three centuries after in the reign of Josiah; and a third in the time of Nehemiah. After enormous sacrifices, king and people bound themselves by oath to "seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul." It was a time of revival and of great joy in Judah, and "the Lord gave them rest round about." There was no more war, it is added, till the five and thirtieth year of Asa's reign.

12. **ATTACK OF BAASHA** (1 Kings xv. 16-22; 2 Chron. xvi. 1-10). A great accession of strength, both moral and material, came to Judah by the absorption of such numbers out of the kingdom of Israel. This, no doubt, alarmed Baasha, King of Israel, so that he bestirred himself to prevent a continuance of the drain on his kingdom. With this view he fortified Ramah, *er-Ram*, as a military station. This fortress commanding the main road from the north to Jerusalem was well fitted to overawe Judah, like Deceleia in Attica or Pylus in Messenia during the Peloponnesian war, and to check the influx of Israelites. The great mistake of Asa's life was made at this time. In order to counteract the project of his enemy, he had recourse to doubtful human help, aggravating the error by purchasing that help with the temple treasures. He made an alliance with the Syrian king, Benhadad of Damascus, who invaded Israel and effected a counter-movement in favour of Judah. Baasha had to withdraw from his design. The materials he had collected for fortifying Ramah were seized by Asa and utilised in building two frontier fortresses—Geba, *Jeba*, farther north than Ramah, and Mizpeh on the road from Samaria. Here also, as we learn from the 41st chapter of Jeremiah, in order to provide against want of water in time of siege he dug a deep well or pit, which had a sad history three centuries subsequently, for into it were cast the

dead bodies of the 70 men treacherously slain by Ishmael. But, though this alliance seemed to effect all that was desired, it was a measure severely censured by the prophet Hanani. And Asa's treatment of Hanani and some who sided with him was another grave mistake in his career. Hanani's faithfulness in picturing the evil results of Asa's want of trust in Jehovah was rewarded with imprisonment, while those who sympathised with him were also harshly used, the king's passion venting itself in petty persecutions.

13. LAST ILLNESS. (2 Kings xiv. 23, 24; 2 Chron. xvi. 11-14).—In his last illness, while suffering from the disease (gout, as it is thought), of which he died, he repeated the great mistake of his life, namely, "seeking not to Jehovah, but to the physicians," and relying less on Divine than human help. Thus the three great mistakes recorded against him were (1) his dependence on a foreign alliance; (2) his persecution of the prophet and his party; (3) his reliance on the skill of the physician more than on the Most High. Each of these brought chastisement in its train. The first act of folly incurred the threatening, "therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars;" the second was followed by the disease in his feet of two years' duration; and the third by the fatal termination of that disease. The second half of his reign was not equal to the first. But though his sun went down under a cloud, his subjects remembered his great services, foreign and domestic, political and religious; and, overlooking his faults, accorded him a funeral of great magnificence. The words of Scripture referring to this are thought by some to point to embalming and cremation. But more probably they refer to the burning of spices—a customary way of honouring the deceased of royal rank, the special thing in Asa's case being the quantity and quality of those spices. Thus was he buried in the sepulchres which he had previously prepared for himself.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *With what kings of Israel was Asa contemporary?*
2. *How did he manifest his hatred of idolatry?*
3. *How did he employ the ten years' peace at the beginning of his reign?*
4. *Several remarkable circumstances were connected with the Cushite war?*
5. *Repeat Asa's prayer before the battle.*
6. *Give the substance of Azariah's address after the victory.*
7. *State the various renewals of the national covenant.*
8. *Specify the three mistakes of Asa's life and their punishment.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT.

14. HIS REFORMS. (2 Chron. xvii. 1).—Asa was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat's reign, lasting a quarter of a century, was one of great prosperity, and distinguished for progress and reform. He established a system of national education, basing it on the Word of God. For this purpose he appointed five commissioners of education, consisting of five princes, assisted by two priests and nine Levites, the actual teachers. These were to visit the cities of Judah and instruct the people, or see that they were instructed in the "Book of the Law of the Lord." The administration of justice also claimed the king's attention. Though actually coming after the alliance with Ahab and Jehu's reproof in point of time, it may be mentioned here with his other reforms. He appointed, or rather reappointed, minor

courts of justice, removing abuses ; he also organised superior courts of judicature for the final settlement of causes, both civil and ecclesiastical, throughout the cities of his kingdom ; and established at the same time a supreme court of appeal in the capital. Thus there lay an appeal from the minor courts to the provincial, and from the provincial to the decision of the metropolitan court. Of the last-named, one department was for all the king's matters, criminal and civil, and over this Zebadiah presided ; another was for all matters of the law, that is, all religious concerns, and of this Amariah was the president. Heads of houses now shared judicial functions with the Levites, while to the latter were allotted the inferior offices of the court. Neither did he neglect the army, but raised it to a state of great efficiency under five generals of distinction. The size of this army, indeed, is so great, reaching to the high figure of 1,160,000 men, that many good authorities have suspected that an error has crept into the numbers. If to the soldiers of Judah proper, however, and to the light-armed troops of the tribe of Benjamin, which attached itself to Judah very soon after the disruption of the kingdom, we add a contingent from Simeon, the bulk of which tribe seems to have been led naturally to adhere to its near neighbour by reason of its position to the south of Judah, and another contingent from the tribe of Dan, which occupied the district to the north-west of Judah, and naturally threw in its lot with the southern kingdom, and, besides all this, a force of auxiliaries from the tributaries, namely, the Philistines and the Arabians, we may be in a position to account perhaps at once for the number of generals and the almost incredible multitude of men making up this vast army of Jehoshaphat. Of this army he made Jerusalem the headquarters ; at the same time he fortified the fenced cities, making them garrison towns, and stationed a strong force on the northern

frontier against the possibility of danger from that quarter, His reforms were thus threefold—educational or religious, judicial, and military. Respected at home, he was feared abroad; his own people showed their loyalty and love by presents, the Philistines in the west paid him tribute in silver, the Arabs on the east brought him tribute in flocks of sheep and goats, while the Edomites in the south continued steady in their allegiance. Superior to his pious father Asa in devotion and activity, he fell but little short of David himself, the great founder of his line. “The Lord was with Jehoshaphat,” it is written, “because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father David, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel” (2 Chron. xvii. 3, 4).^a

15. ALLIANCE WITH AHAB. (1 Kings xxiii.; 2 Chron. xviii).—In an evil hour he entered into an alliance with the house of Ahab by marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah, the wicked daughter of wicked parents, Ahab and Jezebel. This occurred in the thirteenth year of his reign, just sixty years after the separation at Shechem took place, and the consequent estrangement of Judah and Israel began. The excuse for this affinity was probably the growing power of the northern kingdom of Syria, of which the capital was Damascus, and the consequent peril

^a As regards these verses it is necessary to notice a correction and an explanation. The explanation is, that the term *Baalim* is a plural form; and that the plural number of the noun points to the different forms of Baal-worship, as we read, *e.g.*, of Baal-Peor, Baal-Zebub, Baal-Berith. Jehoshaphat, therefore, is declared to have avoided all and every form of Baal-idolatry. The correction which is proposed is to omit the name “David.” The reasons for this omission are that the word is absent from several of the Hebrew manuscripts, that it is absent also from the old Greek version, and that the first ways of *David* are nowhere else contrasted with his last ways; while the earlier part of Asa’s reign was, as we have seen, unquestionably superior to the later portion of the same. The corrected reading, therefore, would give the sense that Jehoshaphat walked in the ways of his own father Asa, such as these ways were in the earlier and better years of Asa.

both to Israel and Judah. Then came the fatal day of Ramoth Gilead, to which his alliance with Ahab led, and from which he narrowly escaped with his life. Ahab had gained two great victories over the Syrian King Benhadad II., but had not got back, it would seem, the towns which Benhadad had stipulated to restore. Accordingly, after an interval of three years, Ahab took advantage of a visit of Jehoshaphat to urge a joint expedition in order to regain Ramoth-Gilead (the heights of Gilead), *es-Salt*, a strong fortress on the east of Jordan, commanding the district of Argob, afterwards Trachonitis, now Lejah, and the cities of Jair. Though still retained by Syria, it now, by terms of treaty, belonged of right to Ahab. But the relation of the two rival kings was now changed. A treaty offensive and defensive was formed with a joint military expedition as the result. The graphic description of the antecedent circumstances, the consultation of the four hundred prophets that promised victory, the prediction of Micaiah that Israel would be as sheep without a shepherd, the consequent disguise of Ahab, his mortal wound from a random bow-shot, belong more to the history of Israel and its king. After this defeat of the allies, and Jehoshaphat's deliverance out of his perilous position, the prophet Jehu, probably son of that Hanani, who had rebuked Asa for his alliance with Benhadad, administered to the King of Judah a well-merited reproof for his alliance. But though he received this rebuke in a proper spirit, and set himself with increased earnestness to the internal improvement of his kingdom, the alliance was continued during the two succeeding reigns. Perhaps a sense of honour prevented Jehoshaphat from breaking it off. Yet the consequences were evil, and only evil.

16. IMPROVEMENT OF HIS MARINE. (1 Kings xxii. 48; 2 Chron. xx. 36).—He now turned his attention to develop the resources of his kingdom by sea, and revive the maritime commerce

commenced in the time of Solomon, but afterwards discontinued. Edom was at this period a dependency of Judah, and governed by a viceroy, as we learn from the brief notice in Kings, "There was then no king in Edom, a deputy was king." This gave Jehoshaphat easy access to the Red Sea. In the execution of his project he built a fleet at Eziongeber, at the north end of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, for the purpose of trading to Tarshish (not the Spanish town, but a port on the Persian Gulf or Red Sea), and to Ophir, or rather of trading with ships of Tarshish—an expression resembling that of our East Indiaman—to Ophir. But in an evil hour he admitted Ahaziah to co-operation, though the prophet Eliezer warned him of the disastrous consequences. Ahaziah having been allowed to take part in building, had of course a share in those ships. But scarce had the vessels of the united navy cleared the port, when a storm shattered them against the rocky ledge outside. A second attempt of a like kind was made at Elath, to which he had transferred his marine, and proved more successful for the time. But on this occasion Jehoshaphat declined Ahaziah's help.

17. CONFEDERACY AGAINST JUDAH (2 Chron. xx.). Though the King of Judah did not fall with his ally at Ramoth, his prestige was lessened. The consequence was that the Ammonites, Moabites, certain of the Maonites, and a tribe of Edomites from beyond the Dead Sea (from Edom, not Syria, according to the common reading), combined and penetrated into the kingdom of Judah as far as the gardens of Engedi (*"spring of the gazelle"*) *Ain Jidy*. The soldiers of this league were so numerous that the King of Judah was threatened with ruin. In this emergency the pious king betook himself to God. He proclaimed a fast, the first proclamation of the kind that we read of. The people assembled in great numbers out of all the cities of Judah to seek the

Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. The king himself engaged in solemn supplication, pleading the almighty power of God, his covenant relation to Israel, and gift of Canaan to the seed of Abraham, *his friend* (an expression first used here, and based on the patriarch's intercession for Sodom as a man with his friend), His service and sanctuary established among them, His promise to hear His people's prayers in time of peril, the intention of their enemies to disinherit or exterminate Israel. While the king was speaking he was heard. The prophetic spirit came down upon Jahaziel, a Levite, with the divine assurance of success that would come without striking a blow. The words of this answer, "Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord," recalled those of Moses and the deliverance at the Red Sea. Jehoshaphat then led his army to Tekoa, *Tekua*, after the following short and significant address:—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." They marched against the enemy not with the war-cry or shout of battle, but—strange sight to see!—with a choir in front of the host singing Jehovah's praise. Meantime dissension broke out in the ranks of the enemy; after the slaughter of the Edomites, the Moabites and the Ammonites turned their arms against each other. The liers-in-wait were probably the Seirites, a detachment of the Edomite contingent, who, taking the singing for the signal of attack, mistook their friends for the enemy. When the men of Judah reached and looked out from the watch-tower in the wilderness, they saw the slaughtered masses of the enemy, and had only to descend to gather the spoils, which, consisting of riches, *garments*, and precious vessels, were so considerable that the process lasted three whole days. Thanksgivings succeeded the victory. On the fourth day they assembled in a valley thence called Berachah (or

"Blessing"), north-west of Tekoa, to bless the Lord for His merciful deliverance.^a

18. **CAMPAIGN AGAINST MOAB** (2 Kings iii.). One result of this victory was that "the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet." Another effect, however, which it had was to encourage Jehoram, king of Israel, to attempt what his brother Ahaziah had failed to effect, namely, the reduction of Moab. With this view he sought the aid of Jehoshaphat and the vassal king of Edom. Notwithstanding the former remonstrances of the prophet and the disasters at Ramoth-Gilead and Eziongeber, Jehoshaphat consented. Jehoram's renunciation of idolatry may have induced him to comply, or the dread of Moab renewing hostilities. In planning this campaign, the first point which Jehoshaphat and Jehoram had to settle was the line of march. The direct route for Judah and Israel would have been to meet somewhere near Jericho, cross the Jordan, travel south down the eastern side of the Dead Sea till they reached the Arnon, the northern border of Moab proper, and thus enter the territory. But this would have interfered with their joining the Edomite forces. Consequently "they fetched a compass of seven days' journey," or about a hundred miles round the south extremity of the Dead Sea, and across the

^a Several of the Psalms are thought to refer to these wonderful events. Some suppose, *e.g.*, that the 83d Psalm may apply to the hostile confederacy, "For they consult together with one consent, they are confederate against thee: the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagarenes, Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek;" that the 46th Psalm may apply to the danger; and that the 48th may refer to the deliverance. Whether these Psalms bear directly or not on these particular events, they speak of themes most suitable for such emergencies—the sure refuge of God's people, and their succour in distress. "For, lo! the kings were assembled, they marched on together. They beheld, so they marvelled, they were terrified, bewildered they hasted away." The camping ground of the allies was at the end of a wady, or dry torrent-bed in the wilderness of Tekoa; and as the town of Tekoa, ten miles due south from the Holy City, was situated on the verge of the desert, and built upon a hill of considerable elevation, the prospect thence extended even to Jerusalem in the distance.

plain where the north of the land of Edom and the south of Moab touched each other. Thus they effected a junction with the Edomite troops; but "there was no water for the host and for the cattle that followed them;" and this meant certain destruction unless relief were found and the evil remedied. At this critical juncture Elisha, the attendant on Elijah, or, as it is expressed in Scripture language, "who poureth water on the hands of Elijah", appeared in the camp of Israel. After a stern denunciation of Jehoram, he gave directions which issued in relief. Trenches were dug in the valley. A cloud burst on the far-off hills of Edom, and soon a copious rain filled the streams that now poured down into the plain, there was enough, and more than enough, for the "cattle"—the animals for slaughter and for the "beasts", that is, those of burthen. Next day, by the time of the morning sacrifice, the thirst of man and beast in the camp of the allies had been slaked. But more was yet in store for them. Their enemies, the Moabites, seeing the water tinged red by the red earth of the trenches and the rays of the rising sun, and fancying it was blood, concluded that something similar to their own recent disaster the year before had occurred, and that the allies had turned their arms against each other. They hurried in disorder to spoil the slain; but now a scene of real slaughter ensued. Such of the Moabites as escaped fled to their own land, hotly pursued by the army of the allies, who turned the war into one of extermination, demolishing the cities, marring the corn-land with stones, stopping the wells of water, and felling the fruit trees. Nor did they stay their work of destruction till they reached the strong fortress of Kir-haraseth. There was perpetrated a deed shocking enough to fill all hearts with horror. Mesha, king of Moab, with seven hundred chosen men, sallied forth from the fortress to cut his way to the camp of Edom; but they were driven back. Then,

as a last resource, the king offered in sacrifice his own son and heir-apparent for a burnt-offering to Chemosh, the Moloch of Moab, to propitiate his anger and procure his aid. The spirit that dictated this sacrifice is embodied in Micah's inquiry, "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" As the ghastly sacrifice was offered on the city walls in the full view of besiegers and besieged, the indignation of Jews and Edomites, as well as of the Moabites themselves, was roused against Israel for forcing the besieged to this extremity. This ended the war; the siege was raised; the besiegers, fearful of Divine vengeance, withdrew without taking the fortress or subduing Moab.

[More than ordinary interest belongs to this war, from the fact that the famous Moabite stone, discovered a few years ago, was set up by this same Mesha. The inscription on it records the deliverance just narrated, and sheds light on some matters of importance, among which we may notice the following :—

(1.) Though David was in part of Moabite descent, his great-grandmother having been Ruth the Moabitess, and though he found an asylum and protection for his parents with the King of Moab, yet, from some unknown cause, he afterwards inflicted a severe and even cruel chastisement on the people of that land, massacring two-thirds of the inhabitants and making the remainder tributary. According to a Jewish tradition David's vengeance was provoked by the treachery of the Moabites in foully murdering his parents; but we find no proof of this treachery. From this chastisement, however, the Moabites soon recovered, and regaining their freedom, either in the reign of Solomon, through the influence of his Moabite wives, or at the division of the kingdom in the reign of Rehoboam, in consequence of its weakened condition at that time, they

developed remarkable powers and enjoyed a large measure of prosperity. Omri, we learn from this monolith, subjugated them again. During Omri's reign and that of his son Ahab, Moab remained in subjection. The words of the inscription referring to this are, "Now Omri, King of Israel, oppressed Moab many days. . . . His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. . . . Now Omri took the land Medeba, and the enemy occupied it in his days and in the days of his son forty years." Owing to the military importance of the place, Omri occupied Medeba (now *Madeba*), fortifying it for a centre of operations. Ahab, it is inferred, aggravated the oppression, exacting an increased annual tribute.

The common notion, therefore, that the Moabites continued in vassalage from the days of David onward till the time of Jehoram is incorrect.

(2.) Immediately on the death of Ahab, Moab revolted, while Mesha headed the revolt and waged a war of independence. As Ahaziah made no effort during the two years of his reign, Mesha employed this time to great advantage, and captured, refortified, and regarrisoned one stronghold after another. Thus we read again in the inscription, "And Chemosh had mercy on it (Moab) in my days; and I built Baal-Meon and made therein the ditch, and I built Kirjathaim . . . and the King of Israel fortified Ataroth, and I assaulted it and captured it, and killed all the warriors of the wall, and I removed from it all the spoil, and offered it before Chemosh in Kirjath; and I placed therein the men of Siran and the men of Mochrath. And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel. And I went in the night, and I fought against it from the break of dawn till noon, and I took it, and slew in all 7000 men."

(3.) Jehoram on his accession determined to repair the losses of his house, and recover those who had

been thus emancipated. For this purpose he took the field in person and fortified Jahaz, a place famous of old for Israel's victory over Sihon, by which they made themselves masters of the country from Arnon (*Wady Mojob*) to Jabbok, *gushing brook* (now *Wady Zurka*), the whole mountain district of Gilead (*hard rocky region*, the modern *Belka*). From this fortified centre he meant to operate in all directions. But he soon found his campaign in the north was likely to be fruitless, and that singly he was no match for Mesha. The record of this runs on the stone as follows :—"And the King of Israel (Jehoram) fortified Jahaz, and occupied it, when he made war against me ; and Chemosh drove him out before me, and I took from Moab 200 men, all its poor, and placed them in Jahaz, and I took it to annex it to Dibon."

(4.) Jehoram having by this time discovered his mistake in invading the northern district of the country of Moab, and his inability without allies to contend with Mesha and his Moabites, organised the expedition of the three allied armies—Israel, Judah, and Edom—and penetrated into the southern district. But though the allies were successful for a time, and inflicted frightful carnage on the Moabites, destroying their cities and devastating their country, yet, strange to say, they did not stay to reap the fruits of victory or follow up their successes ; on the contrary, they withdrew very unaccountably. There is a mystery about that withdrawal. In the Biblical narrative there is only an obscure hint of the cause which has been variously understood, but which, interpreted in the light of this stone monument, leaves little doubt that the indignation spoken of was the anger of the Moabites roused to fury by what they had both seen and suffered, and resulting in the defeat of the allies ; or the indignation of the Almighty, as the expression elsewhere is restricted to the Divine indignation, brought about that result.

At all events, the retreat of these kings, whether caused by their defeat or otherwise, was to the King of Moab a relief, and, if not an actual victory, equivalent to one. It was to Mesha a source of thankfulness and triumph, as also the occasion of his erecting this stone, as he distinctly informs us in the fourth and fifth lines of the inscription :—"And I erected this stone to Chemosh at Korka, a stone of salvation, for he saved me from all despoilers, and let me see my desire upon all my enemies." These despoilers and enemies were obviously the allied sovereigns, Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, the King of Edom, and Jehoram, the commander-in-chief, with their combined hosts.

(5.) The period of rest enjoyed by Moab from this invasion by the three allies, nearly nine centuries B.C. till the period referred to in the burden of Moab by Isaiah chapters xv. and xvi., usually dated 726 B.C., allows time for a development of resources, material, military, and agricultural, as also for an extension of their territory not otherwise easily or satisfactorily accounted for. The Moabites themselves, having expelled the Emims, originally occupied the east of the Dead Sea and lower Jordan as far north as the Jabbok ; but the Amorites expelled them from the country north of the Arnon, leaving the south Arnonic region, the modern *Kerek*, as the proper territory of Moab ; and the Amorites in their turn were dispossessed by the Israelites, and the land north of the Arnon to the Jabbok, now the *Belka*, became the portion of Gad and Reuben. Now in the chapters of Isaiah referred to, we find the Moabites again in possession of that same territory north of the Arnon, which had been taken from them by the Amorites, and from the latter by Israel ; and not only so, but greatly advanced in wealth, population, power, and civilization. How and when was all this achieved ? Mainly, we answer, through the enterprise of Mesha, and during the long peace of more

than a century and a half which followed the retirement of the allies.

We must be excused for dwelling so long on the Moabite inscription, on the ground that it not only bears directly on the war in which Jehoshaphat was implicated through the King of Israel, and especially on the singular termination of that war, but also because it tends to explain the brief and obscure notices which the Old Testament gives of a transaction in which the King of Judah played a distinguished part. It elucidates and confirms the truth of interesting statements made by Scripture in reference to Moab, and particularly to the relation of that land and its inhabitants to the people of Palestine.]

19. JEHOSEPHAT'S CHARACTER. The chief blot on Jehoshaphat's character was his connection with Ahab. To this may be added his toleration of the high places. One passage indeed affirms that he took them away, while another admits they were not taken away, the explanation being that the former refers to his exertions for their removal, the other to the only partial success of those exertions. With these abatements Jehoshaphat stands high among the good kings of Judah. His career was an honourable one. As a man, he was eminently pious; as a friend, he was singularly faithful, even against his own apparent interest; as a king, he was the father of his people, devoting his best energies to their well-being.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Describe Jehoshaphat's reforms, educational, judicial, and military.*
2. *Mention the date and probable cause of his alliance with Ahab.*
3. *What led to the joint expedition against Ramoth-Gilead?*
4. *What change had taken place in the relation of the Kings of Judah and Israel?*

5. *How did he endeavour to improve his marine? To what extent was the attempt successful?*

6. *The pleas used by him, in his supplication on the occasion of the confederacy against Judah, were God's power to help, a pledge of help, and a promise to help.*

7. *Give a full account of the campaign against Moab.*

8. *The Moabite stone confirms in several particulars the sacred record?*

CHAPTER V.

THE REIGN OF JEHORAM.

20. **HIS CRUELTY AND IDOLATRY** (2 Kings viii. 16-24 ; 2 Chron. xxi). Jehoshaphat was succeeded in the throne by his son Jehoram, the husband of Athaliah. And it is noteworthy that now for a time the names of the two royal houses are identical. In Israel they are Ahaziah and Jehoram, both sons of Ahab ; in Judah, Jehoram and Ahaziah, son and grandson respectively of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram's reign began in the fifth year of his namesake of Israel, his father having associated him with himself in the government some three years. This may have been occasioned by Jehoshaphat's absence in the war against the confederates of Moab, Ammon, and Edom. Jehoram reigned alone five years, and so in all eight years. His reign was commenced in blood. It was closed by a foul disease, and in deep disgrace. Among his first acts was the murder of his six brothers. To this he was no doubt instigated by his wicked wife, Athaliah, a daughter of Jezebel. Soon after he set up the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, the dual idolatry of the Phœnicians, with its licentious rites, first introduced into Israel by Jezebel, his mother-in-law, and now encouraged in Judah by Athaliah, his wife. Of the baleful con-

sequences that were certain to ensue, Jehoram had full warning by a letter from the prophet Elijah.^a

21. CALAMITIES DUE TO JEHORAM'S CONDUCT (2 Chron. xxi. 8-11 ; 16-20). The consequences of which the prophet warned Jehoram were not long delayed. First came the revolt and loss of Edom. With this dependency was lost the only remaining seaport in the Idumæan territory—that of Elath (now *Akaba*), on the Red Sea, and thus a fatal blow was dealt to the commerce of the southern kingdom. Then Libnah, a strongly fortified city in the maritime lowland of Judah, one of the fenced cities given to Jehoram's brethren, and a Levitical city besides, renounced allegiance. Next the Philistines and the Arabians, who were willing tributaries to his godly father Jehoshaphat, not only invaded the land, but stormed his own palace, plundered his treasures, and murdered or carried captive his wives and children, all save one. The climax of his misfortune was the frightful disease which, after two years' torture, cut him off in the prime of life. No one loved him while he lived, no one lamented him when he died. "He departed without being desired," without the usual burning in his honour, and without the customary burial in the royal tomb.

^a There is some difficulty about the authorship of this prophetic letter. The question is whether its author was Elijah the Tishbite, whose sphere was generally in the northern kingdom, or a different prophet of the same name who belonged to Judah. Some think that Elijah the Tishbite, foreseeing the declension and disasters of the southern kingdom, and caring jealously for the purity of divine worship in Judah no less than in Israel, wrote this letter before his death, and left it to be afterwards delivered. A more probable explanation, however, is that the account of Elijah's translation in Kings is inserted by the writer of that book out of chronological order for the purpose of completing and concluding the notice of Elijah's ministry, before passing on to that of Elisha's; while the words "who poured water on the hands of Elijah," which, as they stand in the common version, imply a *past* ministration or attendance, may apply to the present. Elijah may thus have been living during part of Jehoram's reign, and Elisha, who, as we have seen, was applied to by the allies in their war with Moab, may have commenced his public prophetic office before his master's translation.

22. REIGN OF AHAZIAH (2 Kings viii. 25-29, and ix. 27-29 ; 2 Chron. xxii.). The fifth king of Judah was Ahaziah, son of Jehoram and Athaliah, and thus grandson of Ahab, and nephew of the Jehoram who succeeded his brother Ahaziah on the throne of Israel. He is indifferently called Ahaz-iah and Jeho-ahaz, names of the same import. The statement (2 Chron. xxii. 2) that he was forty-two years of age when he ascended the throne and succeeded his father, who died at the age of forty years, is commonly supposed to be a copyist's error for twenty-two years of age. Ahaziah was not designated by his father as his successor (his elder brothers having been captured by the Arabians), but was invested by the people themselves. He only reigned one year ; and the record of that brief reign is summed up in one sentence—"He walked in all the ways of the house of Ahab." His alliance with his uncle, the King of Israel, involved him in war with the Syrian king, Hazael, who defeated them and their combined forces at Ramoth. Jehoram, severely wounded, retired to Jezreel, the royal residence of his father, now occupied by his mother Jezebel, and Ahaziah joined him there. We see how closely Ahaziah attached himself to the throne of Ahab and how powerful was the evil influence which his kindred of that family exercised over him. "His mother," it is said, "was his counsellor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab : for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction." Here is the spectacle of a man enticed to evil by his relatives, and worse, by his own mother.

23. HIS DEATH (2 Kings ix. 27-29 ; 2 Chron. xxii. 5-9). Meantime the army at Jezreel declared in favour of Jehu, who advanced at his peculiarly furious pace against the allied sovereigns. In expectation of some important message, they had gone out to meet him. Soon they were made aware of

the turn matters had taken. At once both fled, Jehoram crying to his nephew, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah." The King of Israel perished on the spot. The King of Judah was wounded, but escaped for the time. He made good his flight, as we learn by comparing Kings and Chronicles, first to Megiddo; thence, for better care and concealment perhaps, he made his way to Samaria. Being brought back, however, to Megiddo, he was put to death by Jehu's order. This revolution, the work of a single day, put an end to the wicked house of Ahab and the dynasty of Omri in Israel, while it proved little less fatal to Judah. The royal house of the one was completely exterminated, that of the other was brought close to the verge of extinction. But the agent of this destruction did not stop here. He swept along like a whirlwind, with terrible speed and pitiless determination. First he slew the queen-mother Jezebel, then the seventy sons of Ahab, next forty-two relatives of Ahaziah, and last, "all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests." The acts of this bloody tragedy are enlivened, now by a stroke of satire, then by a touch of grim humour, as when Jezebel asks, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" or when Jehu says with an evident sneer, "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much;" or when he sends the ironical challenge to the guardians of Ahab's children, to look out the best and meetest of their master's sons, to enthrone him, and fight for their master's house. Thus ends the first period of ninety-one years, reaching from the disruption to the revolution 884 B.C.

24. THE USURPATION OF ATHALIAH—HER MEASURES (2 Kings xi. 1-3; 2 Chron. xxii-10-12). Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was the only individual left of the wicked and ill-fated house. Being the wife of Jehoram and mother of Ahaziah, she probably acted as regent during her son's absence at Jezreel, and thus occupied a vantage ground for her subsequent usurpation. Inheriting

the fierce and murderous spirit of her mother Jezebel, she no sooner heard of the revolution effected by Jehu and the death of her son King Ahaziah, than she put to death all the seed-royal—her own grandchildren—except one. This child, then an infant, Joash by name, was saved by his aunt Jehosheba, daughter of Jehoram, sister of Ahaziah, though by a different mother, and wife of Jehoiada the high-priest, and was secreted in the temple for the period of six years, during which the usurpation of Athaliah lasted. Already in her husband's life-time, Athaliah had done her best to introduce the idolatrous Baal-worship which her parents had practised in the northern kingdom. She failed, however, to subvert the temple service, for it was in connection with it that she was at length overthrown. Her usurpation was hurtful to various interests. The house of God, in especial, sustained much damage, as we shall gather from the breaches made in it, and from the time and expense required for their repair. Sacred vessels and instruments of service were appropriated to Baal, who had now his sanctuary (reared, it would seem, in part with materials torn from the temple), as well as images and altars, with the apostate priest Mattan as minister.

25. HER OVERTHROW (2 Kings xi. 4-21 ; 2 Chron. xxiii. 1-18). In the seventh year Jehoiada thought the time had come to show the people their king. He concerted measures with the centurions of the royal guard, and others. With their help, he collected a strong reserve of Levites and chief men out of the cities of Judah, probably at one of the yearly festivals. After producing the young king and binding them by the solemnity of an oath to allegiance he allotted them their posts. The arrangements being completed, the spears and shields of King David, that his own sacred weapons might be employed in the restoration of his descendant, were placed in the hands of the guard, and the first coronation (properly so called) on record took place.

The young king, raised on a royal stand or platform, had the crown put on his head, the testimony placed in his hand, and the holy anointing oil poured on his person. Then proclamation was made amid clapping of hands, blowing of trumpets, and the cheers of the multitude, Levites and people shouting, "God save the king." Meantime Athaliah, roused by the acclamations, hastened, unguarded and with the undaunted spirit of her race, from the palace to the temple, rent her robes, and cried out, "Treason, treason!" But in vain. The cry awakened no sympathy. She was carried out into the Kidron valley, where the fatal blow was struck that ended the short and sinful career of this unfortunate queen. Seldom has such a mighty movement been carried out with so little bloodshed. In addition to Athaliah herself, Mattan was the only person that suffered death.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Narrate the chief facts in the reign of Jehoram.*
2. *What were the disastrous consequences of his misrule?*
3. *What is the Scripture record of Ahaziah's reign?*
4. *How long time intervened between the Disruption and the Revolution? How was the latter brought about?*
5. *Describe the character of Athaliah, her usurpation and overthrow.*
6. *Mention a singular circumstance connected with this important revolution.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESTORATION.

26. **JOASH'S EARLY REIGN** (2 Kings xi. 17; xii. 16; 2 Chron. xxiv. 1-14). The youthful

Joash was thus placed on his ancestral throne, and Jehoiada became regent during his minority. Joash was the sole surviving descendant of David, Jehoram had put all his brethren to death, while his own sons, with one exception, perished in the irruption of the Philistines and Arabians. Ahaziah alone escaped, and his sons, with exception of Joash, had been slain by Athaliah, their grandmother ; while his remoter relatives met their fate by the hand of Jehu. Thus on the brittle thread of the life of the child Joash the covenant of God and the continuance of David's line seemed now to be suspended. But that covenant stood, and the lamp of David's house ceased not to burn. Along with the royal restoration, too, the priestly order was revived in Jehoiada.^a What the prophets had done to oppose idolatry and to keep alive the true religion in the kingdom of Israel, the priest and attending Levites had now in great part accomplished in the kingdom of Judah. The reign of Joash thus commenced with promise. During the regency all went well. The idolatrous worship of Baal was abolished ; his temple, altars, and monuments throughout the land were destroyed, and the worship of Jehovah restored. On attaining his majority Joash set his heart on repairing the temple. It had now stood three centuries and a half, and decay had come with the lapse of time, and by the destructions of the enemy. He began by raising the necessary means. But here a double difficulty had to be overcome. The money payable to the sanctuary, including the half-shekel due by all above 20 years of age, *Exod. xxx. 13*, the money of the dedicated things, and the free-will offerings had been carelessly remitted and the sums paid had been partly diverted from their proper object. A remedy was found for this, with the

^a Stanley asserts that he was the first that got the title of High Priest. The title *The Priest* or *Head Priest*, though less frequently *Great* or *High Priest*, however, was in use long before.

approval of Jehoiada, in putting the management of the funds into other hands, and adopting a different method of allocating them. The half-shekel tax and the voluntary offerings, as may be safely inferred, took the place of the three kinds of contributions already specified, and were deposited in a chest provided for the special purpose of the repairs ; while the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings went to the use of the priests, and the surplus after the repairs were finished was applied to the purchase of the requisite vessels. In this way adequate means were provided, the temple was restored, and the renovation of the sacred pile was accompanied by a revival of religion. Yet one drawback remained, the high-places were not removed. The death of the faithful Jehoiada at the extreme old age of 130 years followed.

27. DECLENSION AND DEATH(2 Kings xii. 17-21; 2 Chron. xxiv. 17-27). Matters now changed, and Joash's subsequent conduct belied the promise of his early days. The princes of Judah, jealous of the priestly order, not only turned the king aside from serving the true God, but induced him to tolerate, if not to re-establish, the idolatrous worship of Baal. These men could never have been more than half-hearted in the worship of Jehovah. Now they followed their true instincts, and the incense of their flattery told upon the king. "They made obeisance to the king," and he "hearkened unto them." But the worst was yet to come. When this gross misconduct called forth the remonstrance of Zechariah, the son and successor of Jehoiada, Joash forgetful of the past, either positively commanded or by some rash expression (as in the case of Henry II. and Thomas à Becket), induced the stoning of his cousin, the companion of his youth—his once truest friend and the son of his greatest benefactor. The place of the murder—"between the temple and the altar"—was the very spot where Joash himself had been guarded by Jehoiada and the Levites. He slew the son where he himself

had been saved by the father. The inspired narrator stigmatises the act thus : "He remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son ;" and our Lord himself quotes it as the last in a long list of bloody persecutions : "From the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah who was slain between the temple and the altar."^a Asa had gone the length of imprisoning a prophet, and Amaziah afterwards imposed silence, but neither ventured farther ; it remained for Joash to proceed to the deed of blood. Retribution overtook the renegade king. Hazael, at the head of the Syrian army, having overrun Israel invaded Judah, and Joash purchased a temporary peace with the vessels of the temple. But at the close of the year Hazael returned, and with forces far inferior in number defeated the army of Joash with great slaughter, plundered the temple, slew the wicked princes, and carried away immense booty to Damascus. This discomfiture was soon followed by severe bodily distemper. But the hand of assassination anticipated the work of disease. Two of his servants slew Joash in the bed to which illness had confined him. This was the first deed of regicide in the kingdom of Judah, though that crime was not uncommon in Israel. As if to relieve the horror which it inspired we are informed that the perpetrators of it were foreigners, one the son of an Ammonitess, and the other of a Moabitess. Joash was a weak, vacillating character, reflecting the varying influences around him. When they were good, he was good ; when they changed, he changed.

^a A contrast has been instituted between the dying utterance of Zechariah and that of Stephen—the one as evincing the spirit of the Old Dispensation, which is retributive justice; the other that of the New, which is free grace. The last words of Zechariah before he breathed his last were : "The Lord look upon it, and require it;" the last words of Stephen before he gave up the ghost were : "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The contrast may be carried a point further. It is death with Zechariah : "when he died he said;" but it is sleep with Stephen : "when he had said this he fell asleep."

Without strength either of faith or of will, he became the prey of designing men. His life was a failure. His end came in sadness after he had reversed the policy of the better part of his reign, contracted the stain of bloodguiltiness, brought misery on the nation in the Syrian war, and provoked at once the wrath of God and the vengeance of man. But before dismissing the reign of this king, we may yet notice three things. In the chastisement which God inflicted by the Syrians, the king is specially marked out as a sufferer: for it is said, "So they executed judgment against Joash," the royal treasures making a large part of the sum sent to the Syrian king. The princes who had instigated and abetted Joash in his sin are singled out as the first victims; for on the approach of the Syrians, we learn that they "destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the King of Damascus." And the flattery and falsehood that had misled him in life, so turned to detestation and disgust, that after death he was excluded from the royal sepulchres.

Reign of Amaziah.

28. **EARLY POLICY** (2 Kings xiv. 1-7; 2 Chron. xxv. 1-12.) The first act of Amaziah on his accession to the throne was to avenge the death of his father. At the same time in obedience to the divine injunction (Deuteronomy xxiv. 16), that "the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers," he exercised a clemency rare in the east, both then and now, and exempted the children from the penalty of their father's crime. And though he did not remove the high places, he began his reign with some promise, "doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord," though "not with a perfect heart." It was with a hesitating step, however, that he pursued the course of right. His first enterprise was

to regain the province of Edom, which had been lost to Judah since the reign of Jehoram. To secure this he made the most vigorous efforts. Having taken the census and enrolled the men of Judah and Benjamin from twenty years old and upwards, he found they amounted to 300,000 fighting men, a little more than half the number that composed the army of Asa. This diminution was owing partly to the destructive wars that had been waged in the interval from Asa's reign and in part to the decadence of the kingdom, both material and moral. But not satisfied with an army of such respectable dimensions, he also hired 100,000 mercenary troops out of Israel for the sum of 100 talents of silver or £45,000 of our currency. This is the first mention of a mercenary army in Jewish history. But though the sum had been paid and the soldiers had arrived, a prophet was sent to forbid the use of these Israelite auxiliaries, and the king was obliged reluctantly to dismiss them. This dismissal was taken as a public affront, and soon led to serious results.^a With his own troops, however, he gained a signal victory over the enemy in the Valley of Salt. In this Idumæan war he slew 10,000 Edomites, made 10,000 prisoners whom he cruelly hurled down the rocky precipices of their native land, and took Sela or the Rock (probably the important city known by the name of Petra), which he named Jokteel, "subdued by God," in token of the great difficulty of this arduous undertaking, and in grateful acknowledgment of the divine aid to which he owed his success.

29. RESULTS OF VICTORY. (2 Kings xiv. 8-16 ; 2 Chron. xxv. 14-24).—This victory of Amaziah

^a A somewhat parallel case occurs in Grecian history. When the Spartans were harrassed by the Helots and Messenians at Ithome, they sought aid a second time from the Athenians. When the succour so earnestly sought and at length granted had arrived, we read that "the Spartans insulted them by sending them back, as men whom they feared, but could not trust," and that "the Athenians returned home swearing enmity against all who sided with the Spartans."

cost him dear if we look to the idolatry and ambition which were among its consequences. Amaziah brought home the idols of the Edomites ; and in his folly bowed down to them as his gods, though they had been powerless to protect their former worshippers. This change in Amaziah's faith was the turning point of his history. The prophet of the Lord, reprimanding him for this stupid idolatry, asked him, "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thy hand?" And the king's reply showed how far he was from being humbled. Elated, moreover, with this victory, he challenged the powerful King of Israel to battle. "Come," he said, "Let us look one another in the face," that is, let us meet face to face in battle. Though ambition was the cause, the occasion may have been the misconduct of the disbanded Israelite mercenaries who, exasperated by their dismissal, retaliated by ravaging the country from Samaria even unto Bethoron, smiting three thousand of the cities of Judah, and carrying off much spoil. The proud descendant of Jehu ridiculed Amaziah's presumption in a scornful parable : "The thistle that was in Lebanon said to the cedar, Give thy daughter as a wife to my son ; and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon and trod down the thistle. Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast : abide now at home ; why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee." Amaziah, stung by the taunt, and underestimating the strength of Joash, was not to be dissuaded—he must fight. And yet Judah was weak as compared with Israel, which under its present king was fast recovering from past disasters ; for Joash had restored the independence of his kingdom, and reconquered much of his territory by three great victories over Syria. The armies of Israel and Judah met at Bethshemesh ("house of the sun"),

now *Ain-shems*, fifteen miles from the capital of Judah. There, on a low table-land, where two plains meet, they engaged in fratricidal conflict. Amaziah was defeated, and brought back a prisoner to Jerusalem. Thus, by a strange irony of events, he was replaced on the paternal throne by the very man he expected to lead in chains. A singular circumstance in the case is that Jerusalem offered no resistance to the conqueror. The gold and silver vessels of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, besides hostages—the only instance of such being mentioned in the Old Testament—were carried away by the conqueror to Samaria.

30. HIS DEATH. (2 Kings xiv. 17-20 ; 2 Chron. xv. 25-28).—Amaziah survived his defeat, but not his disgrace, for fifteen years. In the end he fell a victim to a conspiracy of his own subjects, and though he made his escape to Lachish, he was assassinated there after a reign of nearly thirty years. The same fatality attended son and father—Amaziah and Joash. Both made a fair commencement ; both apostatised ; both rejected a prophet's remonstrance ; and both fell victims of a conspiracy. The first half of the history of Judah comprises the reigns from Rehoboam to that of Amaziah inclusive ; and though it includes the reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat, yet the history of this period is, as a whole, a history of gradual degeneracy and decline.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *How did it happen that at one period a single individual was the sole survivor of the Davidic line?*

2. *What means did Joash adopt to raise funds for repairing the temple?*

3. *A certain class of persons helped to turn Joash aside from the worship of Jehovah.*

4. *In what terms does Scripture stigmatise his cruel ingratitude? What reference to it do we find in the New Testament?*

5. *Point out the consequences of Amaziah's victory over the Edomites.*

6. *Extent of the first half of the history of Judah? Characterise this period of Jewish history.*

CHAPTER VII.

REIGN OF UZZIAH.

31. **EARLY TRAINING AND SUCCESSES.** (2 Kings xv. 1-4 ; 2 Chron. xxvi. 1-8).—God's purpose in relation to the house of David was to be frustrated neither by conspiracy nor by assassination. On the murder of Amaziah the loyalty of the people was roused to enthusiasm on behalf of his son : "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king." Ascending the throne at this early age, Uzziah, called also Azariah, reigned fifty-two years. His was the longest reign except Manasseh's, and the most successful except Jehoshaphat's since the disruption. His mother was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. He was trained under Zechariah, a prophet (to be distinguished from the priest of the same name, martyred in the reign of Joash), "who had understanding in the visions of God." Under such training Uzziah became distinguished for piety. "He sought God in the days of Zechariah . . . and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." A picture of the prosperous state of the kingdom in Uzziah's reign is presented in the 2d chapter of Isaiah. "Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures ; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." Following up his father's success against Edom in the south, he retook and rebuilt Elath,

at the eastern head of the Red Sea on the Gulf of Akaba, with the view of reviving the commerce of the country. After this he subdued the Philistines in the Shefelah or maritime plain on the west, razing to the ground their fortresses of Gath, Tell-es-Safieh, Jabneh, Tebna, and Ashdod (called Azotus in Acts), now the village of Esdud. He turned his face toward the Amorites on the east, and made them tributary ; he checked the encroachments of the Arab tribes of the desert to the south-east—the dwellers in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims or people of *Maan*. By this time his fame extended southward to the frontier of Egypt, “his name,” says the chronicler, “spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt.”

32. HOME ADMINISTRATION (2 Chron. xxvi. 9-16). His success abroad was equalled by his skilful arrangements at home. He strengthened his capital by towers and fortifications ; he kept a standing army of over 300,000 men, which exceeded his father's by 7300, and which he furnished with the most approved weapons ; he reorganised the army, fully developing the military resources of his kingdom. He invented, or introduced, engines for the discharge of projectiles. But though prepared for war, Uzziah was a man of peace ; he “loved husbandry” we are told. He employed husbandmen and vinedressers in the Judæan hills. His cattle ranged three different pasture grounds, namely, the low country between the hills and the sea, the plains or downs to the east of the Jordan, and the wilderness or wild pasture land to the south and south-east. In this last he built towers as places of refuge for the herdsmen and the herds of cattle, and of defence against Arab and other plunderers. At the same time he dug wells (or cisterns) to preserve the rainfall, on which the flocks depended.

33. HIS SIN AND PUNISHMENT (2 Kings xv. 5-7 ; 2 Cor. xxvi. 16-23). But his success made him giddy. In his pride he intruded into the priest's office,

presuming to offer incense, and repeating the transgression of Korah and his company. To the glories of his kingly rule he aspired to add the splendours of the priesthood, and assumed the peculiar priestly function of burning incense on the golden altar. Swift and sore was the punishment of Uzziah's sin. Suddenly, as in the case of Gehazi, the leprous spot showed itself in his forehead. As a consequence, he was shut out for ever from the earthly temple, dwelling in a house of liberation, as the words literally mean, where those dwelt whom the Lord had manumitted from His service. Neither was he buried in the royal vaults, but apart in the field of burial which belonged to the kings.

34. CALAMITIES OF HIS REIGN (Joel i., ii. ; Amos iv. 9). Several calamities of a public kind occurred in the reign of Uzziah. For our information on these and other matters of interest, we are mainly indebted to the contemporary records of the prophets, which from this period begin to be largely available. The earlier chapters of Isaiah in particular belong to this reign, while Joel (though we cannot fix his date with certainty), and Amos, and Hosea (though they deal mainly with the northern kingdom), give some aid. One of the calamities occurring in the reign of Uzziah, if Joel's prophecy is of that date, was a plague of locusts. The prophet's account of this visitation, of the appearance of the locusts, their multitudes, their array, their ravages, and the extreme distress consequent thereon, is as terrible as it is vivid. Another calamity was an earthquake of extraordinary severity, known as *the* earthquake by way of eminence. It formed a sort of chronological era by which men reckoned time. Thus Amos speaks of his prophetic call as two years before the earthquake ; while allusions to its shocks and their consequences, the huge clefts, the upheavals, the undulations, the sea bursting its barriers, tinge deeply the prophetic language of that day. Even three centuries afterwards the prophet of the

captivity refers to that same earthquake, and the terror which it inspired, in the following terms:—
 “Yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.”

Reign of Jotham.

35. HIS CHARACTER (2 Kings xv. 32-38; 2 Chr. xvii. 1, 2). Jotham had been regent from the time of his father's leprosy, a space of some six or seven years. From his accession, on the death of his father, his reign lasted sixteen years, and thus about twenty-two years in all. Jotham was a pious prince, and did “that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Uzziah did.” It is expressly stated that he avoided the impious action of his father, in intruding into the temple. In other respects he followed his example, carrying on his improvements and carrying out his policy. But notwithstanding his personal piety and worth, Jotham does not appear to have possessed much force of character, or to have exercised any very decided influence over his subjects. This may be concluded from the wide-spread corruption of the times. Hosea, too, who prophesied from an early period of Uzziah's reign, gives occasional glimpses of the state of things in Judah as now, like Israel previously, descending the downward slope of sin.

36. WORKS OF JOTHAM (2 Chron. xxvii. 3-6). Jotham built the high gate of the temple, and so secured it against attack on the north side; he also strengthened the southern projection of Moriah between the Tyropæon valley and that of Jehoshaphat or the Kidron; for “on the wall of Ophel he built much.” In the hill-country of Judah, too, he built cities, and in the forests castles as places of fortification and defence. The danger of attack implied by such fortifications is explained by the passing reference (2 Kings xv. 37) to Rezin and Pekah, which shows that an alliance had been formed between Syria and Israel against the great and steadily advancing power

of Assyria. There can be no doubt that they desired to draw Judah into this alliance, but they dreaded Judah's adherence to the house of David. On this account they eventually tried to set one Ben-Tabaal, an usurper, on the throne of the country, as more likely to fall in with their plans and purposes. Consequently an attack from that quarter was naturally dreaded. Hosea and Isaiah both refer to the measures of defence resorted to by Uzziah and afterwards by Jotham. The former (viii. 14) pronounces them useless : "Judah hath multiplied fenced cities ; but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof." Similarly Isaiah (ii. 15) threatens a day of visitation "on every high tower and every fenced wall." Farther, as the alliance between Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Samaria, took place in the reign of Jotham, and as mention is made of "all his (Jotham's) wars and ways," it is inferred that he had been in conflict with those allied sovereigns. He put down, moreover, the revolt of the Ammonites, and compelled them to pay for three years afterwards an additional annual tribute, partly in money to the amount of a hundred talents of silver, and partly in kind, the latter amounting to ten thousand measures of wheat and ten thousand of barley. Thus he reigned righteously in peace, and bore himself bravely in war ; and "he slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father."

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Whose reign was the longest, and whose the most successful since the Disruption?*
2. *Isaiah's picture of the prosperous state of the kingdom during the reign of Uzziah.*
3. *Describe his wise administration both of home and foreign affairs.*
4. *Nature of his sin, and disasters of his reign?*
5. *Scripturc account of the character of Jotham?*
6. *Give a short account of Jotham's works and wars.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REIGN OF AHAZ.

37. HIS WICKEDNESS (2 Kings xvi. 1-4 ; 2 Chron. xxviii. 1-4). To Jotham succeeded Ahaz, at the age of twenty years. His reign lasted sixteen years. He was the worst of all the kings that had reigned in Judah. No monarch of the line of David had plunged so deeply into iniquity and idolatry. In other reigns the people had resorted to the high places, but Ahaz set his subjects an example by sacrificing and burning incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. He made images for Baalim, that is, for representations of the Phœnician god in his different aspects and characters ; and sacrificed to Moloch, the monster god of the Ammonites. He followed the pernicious example of the worst kings of Israel, adopting the practices prevalent in the days of Ahab and Ahaziah. Not content with re-introducing the worship of Baal, which had been cut off by Jehu in the northern kingdom and by Jehoiada in the southern, he has the unenviable notoriety of introducing the first historically attested human sacrifice among the Hebrew people. Amos (v. 26) indeed hints at the worship of Moloch, and Ezekiel (xx. 26) indistinctly at the devoting or passing through the fire of the firstborn in the wilderness. But in regard to Ahaz we have the direct statement that "he made his son pass through the fire according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." Probably this inhuman act was perpetrated when Ahaz was hard pressed by his enemies in order to propitiate the deity and secure deliverance.

38. HIS APOSTACY (2 Kings xvi. 8-19 ; 2 Chron. xxviii. 22-25). Ahaz went from bad to worse. In

the later years of his reign, he apostatised totally from the national religion, cutting off the borders of the stands on which the lavers rested, removing the brazen sea from the oxen, altering or removing the royal covert or canopied seat and the private passage. Not only did he destroy the vessels of the sanctuary, but he shut up the temple and discontinued the service. Having proceeded thus far in abolishing the worship of Jehovah, he erected altars through Jerusalem and high places throughout the cities of Judah, to burn incense unto other gods. He had a fondness for foreign worship and a fatal proneness to imitation of alien cults. Having seen an altar at Damascus, where, as a vassal, he had to wait on Tiglath Pileser, he sent a model of it for a pattern to his facile priest Urijah. This new altar Urijah had placed in front of the brazen altar as an interim arrangement; but Ahaz, on his return, had the brazen altar removed from its place in front of the temple porch and facing the eastern gate to the north side, to make way for the imported altar. On this all sacrifices in future were to be offered; the brazen altar he retained for the purpose of enquiring by it, or, as it may rather mean, until the king would inquire, that is, consider what was to be done with it.

39. SYRO-ISRAELITE WAR (2 Kings xv. 5-9; 2 Chron. xviii. 5-19; Isaiah vii.-xii.). When his iniquity was full, the storm-cloud of Divine vengeance, some drops of which had already fallen, burst on Ahaz. The Syro-Israelite war broke out. Pekah, King of Samaria, and Rezin, King of Damascus, made each an invasion of the kingdom, the latter carrying away a multitude of captives to Damascus, and the former defeating Ahaz with the immense slaughter of 120,000 men and with 200,000 captives. The prisoners, however, were restored on the remonstrance of the prophet Oded, who reproved the leaders of the army of Israel for forgetting the law that forbade them to make bondmen of their brethren.

A second invasion by Pekah and Rezin now combined, having for its object the setting of one Ben-Tabeal on the throne, dismayed both king and people, who were moved with fear "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." In this emergency, Isaiah met Ahaz, assuring him that these two "smoking firebrands" that had caused such a flame would soon be quenched. The siege of Jerusalem failed, and the allies withdrew. But in retiring Rezin marched against Elath on the Red Sea, which for seventy years had been occupied by the Jews, whom Rezin now expelled, gaining the place for Syria, or recovering it for Edom, if we adopt an amended text. Perils, nevertheless, arose before Ahaz on every side. There were the allied sovereigns in the north. There were the Edomites, who had already smitten Judah; and the Philistines, who had already seized six of its important towns—namely, Bethshemesh, Ajalon, Gederoth, Shocho, Timnah, and Gimzo. There was also disaffection in Judah itself (Isaiah viii. 6). One man, indeed, stood out heroically. Isaiah urged Ahaz to trust Jehovah and face his enemies without fear. He offered him a sign from Jehovah to assure him. But the misguided king hypocritically declined the sign (Isaiah vii. 10, &c.), preferring to rely rather on the help of Assyria than on the covenant of Jehovah.

40. AHAZ AND ASSYRIA (2 Kings xvi. 7-9; 2 Chron. xxviii. 16). He applied to Tiglath Pileser, and his application was readily accepted. It was obviously in the interest of Assyria that it should be so. Accordingly, the desired assistance came. Tiglath Pileser caused a diversion in favour of Ahaz by marching against Syria, taking its capital Damascus, and slaying Rezin, its king. He also ravaged the kingdom of Israel, wresting from it its northern district and transjordanic territory. Pekah, too, had fallen by the hands of conspirators. The southern tribes—Philistines, Edomites, and others—were also

chastised. But the exactions of the Assyrian conqueror obliged Ahaz to rifle the treasures of the temple, the palace, and the princes. Neither was the help effectual. "He helped him not ;" "he distressed him, but strengthened him not." It did not restore the cities which the Philistines had taken. It crippled his resources by the payment of a heavy yearly impost. It reduced Ahaz himself to the position of a vassal. At length this weak and wicked king, who had brought such evil on the land, died, and was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal sepulchres.

Reign of Hezekiah.

41. **REVIVAL OF RELIGION** (2 Kings xviii. 1-8 ; 2 Chron. xxix.). Hezekiah, the godly son of an ungodly sire, at the age of twenty-five ascended the throne of Judah. His mother's name was Abijah, daughter of Zechariah. He began his reign by reopening the temple and repairing its doors, restoring the worship of Jehovah and reinstating the priests and Levites in their courses. The revival of religion began with the king ; then the priests purified themselves. Yet the priests, influenced perhaps by the high priest Urijah, who had been so obsequious to Ahaz, were less zealous than the Levites in this matter. Subsequently they cleansed the temple, as they alone could enter the temple proper, while the Levites might only enter the inner court. The Levites who engaged in the work retained the triple division of Kohathites, Merarites, and Gershonites ; and there was a similar triple division of the musicians under Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. The time occupied in cleansing the temple was no less than sixteen days. Eight days were required for the cleansing of the courts up to the porch and purifying themselves in preparation for the work, and eight more were needed for the cleansing of the temple proper. Next followed solemn expiatory

sacrifices. A sin-offering consisting of the four sorts of sacrificial animals and seven of each kind, to make atonement, not only for Judah, but for "all Israel," in hope of the reunion of both in one religious community. When the priests had made reconciliation, with the blood of these expiatory victims, there was offered also a burnt-offering expressive of dedication to God. Then the stated temple service was resumed with the regular morning sacrifice ; while the musical service instituted by David proceeded at the same time, the singers singing and the trumpeters sounding.

42. THE GREAT PASSEOVER (2 Chr. xxx.). It was further proposed to celebrate the Passover. This solemnity was kept on a grand scale. Invitations were issued to Israel as well as Judah to take part in it. And though some mocked this measure and Ephraim laughed it to scorn, yet divers of Asher and Manasseh, and of Zebulun, and many even from Ephraim and Issachar attended. The feast lasted not merely the usual time of seven days, but, owing to the general enthusiasm, for fourteen days ; the second seven days were voluntary, and the king and princes supplied the people with victims. A distinction is made "between all the congregation that came out of Israel," and "the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah." By the former we are to understand probably the Israelites proper who accepted the king's invitation, by the latter Israelites who had been old residents in Judæa, or even recent settlers who had made Judæa their home. This passover was observed in the second month. The law made a concession to persons absent on a journey, or labouring under some defilement. Here the letter was made to yield to the spirit, because the temple was not cleansed till after the 14th day of the 1st month of the sacred year, Nisan or Abib, and the priests were not sufficiently purified till then. Time, too, was needed for publishing the proclamation through-

out Israël, and many of the Israelites who had assembled on the occasion had not had the requisite time for purification. For the latter the Levites officiated, killing the lambs and handing the blood to the officiating priest, duties which ordinarily pertained to the offerers themselves. Hezekiah himself, too, prayed for such, saying, "The good Lord pardon everyone that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

43. EXTERMINATION OF IDOLATRY (2 Chr. xxxi; 2 Kings xviii. 4.) He then proceeded to root idolatry out of his dominions. The high places that even the best of his predecessors had spared or winked at were extirpated. The people who were present at the passover went forth with royal sanction to destroy all vestiges of idolatry, not only through the cities of Judah and Benjamin, but those of Ephraim and Manasseh as well. The brazen serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, which in the course of time had become an object of superstitious reverence, and even of idolatrous worship (for incense was burnt before it), he brake in pieces, calling it Nehushtan, a mere piece of brass. When this was finished he had important work of reconstruction to engage in. Nor was any time lost; immediately after the passover the necessary re-appointment of the courses of the priests and Levites, which had been suspended, took place, and their re-arrangement so as to relieve each other in regular succession settled. The king also issued an order for their proper payment out of the tithes and first fruits, and set an example of liberality by his personal contributions for the sacrificial service. Three lists were made out—one of the priests by the house of their fathers, that is, by their families; another of the Levites from twenty years and upwards, according to their courses; and a third of the members of the priestly and Levitical families.

Certain officers furnished with these lists were appointed, both in town and country, to make the due distribution to the priests and Levites according to their service, and to their families when they themselves were officiating at the temple in Jerusalem.

44. **WARS** (2 Kings viii. 4-12). During the reign of Ahaz in Judah, the trans-Jordanic tribes had been carried into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser. Shalmaneser, his successor on the Assyrian throne, first made Hoshea, King of Israel, tributary; but, when he refused the tribute and made a treaty with So, King of Egypt, Shalmaneser imprisoned him, and eventually laid siege to Samaria his capital. When, after a siege of three years Samaria was taken, the Assyrian King carried Israel captive, away beyond the Euphrates, planting them in Halah and Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. This occurred in the sixth year of Hezekiah, who had also refused to remain tributary to Shalmaneser. Hezekiah followed up his revolt against Shalmaneser by his Philistine campaign. His success in this expedition is shown by the list of cities enumerated in the Assyrian records, as re-captured by Sennacherib. It was probably the prolonged and ineffectual siege of Tyre that prevented the immediate declaration of war by the monarch of Assyria.

45. **FIRST INVASION BY SENNACHERIB** (2 Kings xviii. 13-16; 2 Chron. xxxii. 1-8). In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, and thus after the lapse of a considerable period, Sennacherib sent apparently by his father, Sargon, advanced against the fenced cities of Judah and took them. The main object of attack, however, was probably Egypt, the inroad into Judah being a means to that. Hezekiah bravely encouraged his people, and made all possible preparations (see Isaiah xxii.), concealing the fountains outside the city, securing the water-supply, bringing the Gihon by subterranean conduits

down the valley to a reservoir between the two walls, repairing the breaches, deepening the trenches, raising the walls, and strengthening all the fortifications. To such defences some of the people were too prone to trust; others formed a troublesome Egyptian party with Shebna at their head; many gave themselves up to wild revelry. Hezekiah long stood firm, yet, strange to say, he did not continue to do so, but unexpectedly tendered submission. Either he found himself hampered by the Egyptian party, or his faith faltered and his courage failed him on the sudden alarm. The terms imposed by Sennacherib were severe. To raise the huge tribute exacted, Hezekiah had to strip the doors and pillars of the temple. Sennacherib withdrew. But it was only a temporary respite that Hezekiah purchased.

46. SECOND INVASION BY SENNACHERIB (2 Kings xviii. 17-19; 2 Chron. xxxii. 9-24). Some time after (how long and for what reason is not clear) Sennacherib returned. With this breach of faith Isaiah (xxxiii.) upbraids him, saying, "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest *treacherously*, and they dealt not treacherously with thee," and again at the 8th verse he adds, "He hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man." He began his second invasion, or expedition (if, as some think, there was only one invasion), by attacking the strongholds of Lachish; while by three of his principal officers, Tartan, captain or general, Rabсарis, chief of the eunuchs, and Rabshakeh, chief cup-bearer, he demanded in most insulting terms, the speedy and unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. It is possible that during the interval between the two campaigns Hezekiah may have been coquetting with the Assyrian's great rival in Egypt. Indeed this seems implied in the language with which Rabshakeh reproached him for leaning on such a rotten reed as Egypt (see also Isaiah xxx. and xxxi.). At any

rate Sennacherib no doubt felt it unsafe to resume operations against Egypt, as he was now probably proceeding to do, without first subduing Judah. On his way to punish his chief enemy he had raised or completed the siege of Lachish, and proceeded to invest Libnah situated either at *Arak el Menshiyeh*, when hearing of the intended expedition of Tirhakah the heroic King of Cush he resolved to meet him. But, before starting, he sent a threatening letter to Hezekiah. Hezekiah had recourse to prayer, spreading out the letter before the Lord. And the prophet brought him an answer of peace. The deliverance came in due time. That very night the angel of the Lord went out and slew 185,000 men of the Assyrian host; the slain were the flower of the army, "all the mighty men of valour," as it is stated by the Chronicler, "and the leaders and captains in the camp."^a Whatever means were at work for the destruction of the Assyrian host the visitation was from the Almighty:—

"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed on the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still."

Some time after his return to Nineveh Sennacherib was murdered by his own sons Adrammelech and Sharezer, when he was worshipping in the house of his god Nisrock.

^a The blast is thought by some who retain that meaning of the word to have been the Simoom or a storm of some sort, or pestilence, or even the attack of Tirhakah. Herodotus gives a disguised account of this deliverance, applying it to another city than Jerusalem and to another person than Hezekiah—Pelusium the former and Sethos the latter. This destruction of the enemy he attributes to multitudes of field-mice gnawing the bowstrings, quivers, and shield-handles of the enemy.

47. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS (2 Kings xx. 1-11 ; 2 Chron. xxxii. 24-26 ; Isaiah xxxviii.) An illness apparently of an inflammatory nature, is recorded to have befallen the king, bringing him to the verge of the grave. This sickness is memorable not only for the prophet's warning, "Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live," and the king's prayer, but also for the sign so variously interpreted, which was to serve as an assurance of the prolongation of his life for fifteen years, which was promised in answer to his prayer.

48. HIS ERROR AND HIS DEATH (2 Kings xx. 12-21 ; 2 Chron. xxxii. 25-33). Soon after his recovery Hezekiah received congratulatory letters and a present from Merodach-Baladan, the King of Babylon. This was the first contact with a power which in the end proved so disastrous to Judah. There was, no doubt, an ulterior object in the mission. The Babylonians were vassals of Assyria, and their King was feeling his way to an alliance with Judah and Egypt in order to gain his independence. We can thus understand how Hezekiah gave the messengers such a friendly reception. There was a community of feeling and interest in the matter. With the view probably of showing what he was capable of as an ally, Hezekiah displayed his treasures to the messengers. But this vain and dangerous exhibition called forth the stern rebuke of the prophet who foretold that all these treasures would be carried as spoil to Babylon, and that his sons would be made eunuchs in the palace of the Babylonian King, the first intimation of an event, the captivity, which henceforth became the subject of so many prophetic references. Hezekiah was deeply humbled and in mercy the threat was not made good in his day. His words "Is it not good if peace and truth be in my days?" were the expression of a spirit grateful for the merciful suspension of judgment, and devoutly acknowledging the righteous judgments of

God. The remainder of his days was peaceful, and in peace Hezekiah died in the twenty-ninth year of his reign.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *What different forms of idolatry were practised by Ahaz?*
2. *Facts proving his total apostasy?*
3. *Give a brief history of the Syro-Israelite war.*
4. *State the amount and results of the help which Tiglath-Pileser gave to Ahaz.*
5. *The various means employed by Hezekiah for the revival of religion.*
6. *What tribes of Israel were represented at the great Passover in Hezekiah's reign?*
7. *His extermination of idolatry extended beyond Judah and Benjamin?*
8. *What evidence is there of Hezekiah's success in his Philistine campaign?*
9. *What was the issue of Sennacherib's first invasion?*
10. *How did his second invasion terminate?*
11. *Mention some memorable circumstances connected with Hezekiah's sickness.*
12. *What grave error did he fall into after his recovery?*

CHAPTER IX.

REIGN OF MANASSEH.

49. TIME OF REACTION. (2 Kings xxi. 1-9 ; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 1-10).—Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, ascended the throne when only twelve years of age. His mother's name was Hephzibah "my delight is in her," the name which Isaiah (lxii. 4) applies to Jerusalem as restored to divine favour. Manasseh

reigned fifty-five years, the longest and most miserable reign in the annals of Judah. A time of reaction set in, which has been compared to that under Julian against Christianity. The object on which, as it seemed, Manasseh set his heart was the reversal of his father's policy, and the undoing of the good his father had done. His extreme youth left him in the hands of advisers who, for their own purposes, rather helped than hindered him in evil. Chief among these probably was the ex-minister Shebna, a proud and worldly man, of low birth or foreign parentage, as is inferred from no mention being made of his father, who had held in Hezekiah's time the high office of treasurer or prefect of the palace, but had been deposed or reduced to the subordinate one of secretary, largely in consequence of his Egyptian sympathies and anti-theocratic tendencies. Early in this reign idolatry began to be insidiously revived. The high places were restored for idolatrous purposes; altars to Baal and images of Ashtoreth once more filled the land. Even in the sanctuary itself a wooden image or pillar of Ashtoreth was set up. After the re-introduction of Baal-worship, Manasseh proceeded to the novelty of Sabaism or star-worship without images, worshipping all the host of heaven, and erecting altars within the precincts of the temple, in the court of the priests as well as in that of the people. The slave of superstition, he practised witchcraft and divination. He was as cruel, too, as he was superstitious. He resumed the horrid rites of Moloch, and made his children pass through the fire (compare Jerem. vii. 30 and 31). His tyranny was carried out in deeds of savage atrocity. The streets of the city ran with the blood of the innocent. The struggle between idolatry and the religion of the true God was marked by bloody persecution. Many sealed their testimony with their blood. Among these tradition reckons Isaiah, and represents him as sawn asunder. He had exerted his influence

even in Hezekiah's time against the selfish ambition and wrong-headed policy of Shebna (see Isaiah xxii. 15-19). He had also, no doubt, rebuked the idolatry of Manasseh, and thus had prepared himself to be a victim. Many more met the same fate. The short and terrible statement of Scripture is that "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." The bloodshed of this period left a lasting impression on the public mind. The subsequent calamities of Judah on to the final catastrophe were regarded as the punishment justly due to Manasseh's crimes. Thus, in the reign of Jehoiakim we read, "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed ; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon." The sin in which the nation became involved, with this worthless and wicked king at its head, met its penalty in national calamity. The dark catalogue of Manasseh's sins included three capital offences against the worship of Jehovah. He sinned, as we have seen, against the *service* of God, encouraging some of the worst forms of idolatry. He sinned against the *house* of God, desecrating it by erecting the asherah image or pillar, and removing the Ark of the Covenant, as may be inferred from the words of Josiah in 2 Chron. xxxv. 3, "Put the ark in the house which Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel, did build." He sinned, too, as it appears, against the *Word* of God, the law being so neglected or misused, that the discovery of a copy half a century afterwards was a surprise. And the sins of the court infected all classes of society with the same deadly disease, while the degradation of religion was accompanied by a corruption of morals. The houses of Jerusalem were defiled by the burning of incense on their roofs unto all the host of heaven, and by pouring out drink offerings to

other gods (Jer. xix. 13). Fathers, mothers, and children joined together throughout the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem in worshipping the queen of heaven, and in pouring out drink offerings to other gods (Jer. vii. 18). They kindled the fires of Tophet, and practised nameless pollutions as a part of religious worship in the very precincts of the temple. The state of things in Manasseh's reign is sketched in terrible colours by Zephaniah (iii. 1-4), and Jeremiah, who were commencing their official career towards the close of that period, as Isaiah ended his career soon after its commencement. Yet during this long interval, comprehending nearly the whole of Manasseh's reign, the voice of prophecy was hushed. Only one recorded utterance (2 Kings xxi. 12-14) can be surely reckoned as belonging to it.

50. PUNISHMENT AND REPENTANCE. (2 Kings xxv. 10-18; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11-20).—Prophets had given faithful warning to both king and people, but to no purpose; they hardened their neck against reproof. At length, the day of reckoning came. The measure of Manasseh's iniquities became completely full; Judah had been willingly seduced by him to sin; and now the Almighty was to "bring evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth of it both his ears shall tingle," and to "stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab." A political error in the previous reign had sown the seed which the sins of Manasseh brought to maturity. The Babylonian alliance had been a step in a wrong direction. The revolt of the King of Babylon was soon repressed, and his ally naturally came in for his share of the punishment. Esarhaddon's army came up against Jerusalem. The assault of his captains on Jerusalem had succeeded better, it appears, than the invasion of his father Sennacherib. Manasseh was taken captive with hooks or rather rings, bound hand

and foot with chains, and carried off to Babylon, where Esarhaddon then held his court, although Nineveh was the Assyrian capital. The removal of Manasseh to Babylon was overruled to his spiritual benefit; in deserved wrath God remembered mercy. The monarch had now time to think; thought brought humiliation; grace was given him to repent, and in mercy he obtained pardon. He was also restored to his country and crown. Works of importance were undertaken by him after his return. He raised a new outer wall of the city of David on the west of Gihon; he completed the fortifications of Ophel, the southern projection of the temple hill between the Tyropœan ravine and Kidron valley. He also stationed captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. The best evidence of his penitence is found in the restoration of the worship of Jehovah, and in his abolition of idolatry. Long as was this reign the Biblical narrative is scanty, as though the sacred writer shrunk from the records of so calamitous a time. Eighteen verses in Kings and twenty in Chronicles comprise the story of more than half a century. Manasseh was buried in his own sepulchre in the garden of Uzzah.

51. **REIGN OF AMON** (2 Kings xxi. 19-26; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 21-25). Amon was a faithful follower of the idolatrous practices of Manasseh, his father. His short uneventful reign of two years ended in his assassination by his own servants. His subjects, however, avenged him by putting to death his murderers. The picture of his brief and evil reign, which is given by Zephaniah, exhibits idolatry, oppression, and shameless recklessness in dire prominence.

Reign of Josiah.

52. **REFORMATION OF RELIGION** (2 Kings xxii. 1-8; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-7). Josiah was a name as dear to the Jewish heart as that of Manasseh was hateful. Happily for him, he had the careful reli-

gious training of Hilkiah the high-priest, and came in contact with some who remained faithful in presence of the prevalent idolatry. Coming to the throne at the age of eight years, he reigned one and thirty years, and he "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." The turning-point in his spiritual life was his sixteenth year, when he "began to seek after the God of David his father." Thus he was at once an example of youthful piety and a model of kingly virtue. The hatred of idolatry, which he manifested as early as his sixteenth year, was intense. He took practical steps to extirpate it four years afterwards, when he had fully matured his plans and attained what appears to have been the majority of Jewish sovereigns. His zeal for the worship of Jehovah kept pace with his enmity to idolatry; and in both he outstripped the most pious of his predecessors—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and even Hezekiah. He set about the purification of his kingdom from idolatry by breaking to pieces and burning, in the fields of Kidron, the vessels impiously brought into the temple or its courts for the worship of Baal, of the grove, and of the host of heaven. He broke down the altars and the high places or shrines, and destroyed the images. He defiled the places devoted to idol worship with the ashes and bones of the dead, pouring contempt upon them, and rendering them objects of disgust. The carved work of the *asherah*, the image or pillar of Ashtoreth (called in the English version "a graven image of the grove"), which the daring impiety of Manasseh had set up in the temple, perhaps in the very holy of holies, on the removal of the ark, Josiah brought out from the house of the Lord, burnt the wooden part, and stamped the metallic portion small to powder, casting the remains on the graves of the idolaters. He defiled Tophet, in the valley of Hinnom. This cursed spot

which derived its name either from the sacrificial fires that burnt there, or from the drum that drowned the screams of the children that were sacrificed there, had been set apart for the worship of Moloch. After its pollution by Josiah, it became more abominable, if that were possible, as the receptacle of all the city's filth, and, as some say, a place for burning the corpses of criminals, the carcasses of animals, and all offal. No wonder this place of horrors furnished the Jews of a later age with the picture of the place of future punishment, thence called by them *Geenna* from *Ge-Hinnom*, the valley of Hinnom. The king then took away the horses of the sun, removed their stables which extended from the entering in of the house of the Lord to the chamber of Nathan-melech in the suburbs, and burnt the chariots with fire. But the work of purification had to be carried much farther. It was a Herculean task. There were the altars on the roof of Ahab's palace, and the altars which Manasseh had erected in the two courts of the temple, as also other and older abominations, such as the high places built by Solomon for the deities of his foreign wives. All these had to be displaced. The filthy orgies of the Sodomites, too, which were carried on close by the house of the Lord, were suppressed as well as the sanguinary rites of Moloch. Moreover, in order to accomplish the work effectually, he made a personal visitation throughout the land, while the purification was being carried on, from Gebain Benjamin southward to Beersheba, *Bires-Seba*, the two extreme limits of Judah, north and south. In this tour of personal inspection, too, he did not confine himself to the limits of Judah, but entered the kingdom of Israel, over which, in its half-desolate condition and owing to the weakness of Assyria, he seems to have been able to extend his sovereignty. So we find him on the same errand and equally active "in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali." A prophecy uttered

nearly three centuries and a half previously had now its fulfilment. After Jeroboam had set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and as he was standing by the altar at Bethel to burn incense, a seer denounced the unholy enterprise, foretold the disasters that would ensue, and predicted that a king of the house of David, Josiah by name, would burn the idolaters' bones upon that altar. It was with the altar of Jeroboam at Bethel that the purification of Israel now began. "As Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount." Out of those rock-hewn tombs he took the bones and burnt them on the altar. So Bethel, once the house of God, as the name imports, then the house of idols, became at last the house of vanity (Bethaven). But another sepulchre, distinguished by its pillar, caught Josiah's eye. He found it was the pillar which marked the tomb of the man of God who had come from Judah to protest against the altar and predict its end. At once the king gave orders to respect his memory, and so his bones, as well as those of the prophet of Samaria, were spared. Josiah also burnt the high place or shrine, and the grove (or rather image) that were beside the altar. Likewise in the cities of Samaria he took away "the houses of the high places," slaying the priests upon the altars and burning men's bones upon them. The idolatrous priests, consecrated by the kings of Judah after the example of Jeroboam, Josiah set entirely aside; the Levitical priests attached to the high places for Jehovah-worship in the cities of Judah he deposed and brought to Jerusalem, debarring them as defiled, from the service of the temple, but permitted to derive support from the temple revenues. The priests of the high places at Bethel he put to death. It must be added that though Josiah did his best to abolish idolatry in every form, and though he largely succeeded, secret superstitious practices connected with soothsaying of various kinds, teraphim, and other

idolatrous usages, were more difficult to reach ; and the reformation was on the whole more external than real, as may be gathered from the numerous passages in Jeremiah (iv. 14, vi. 19, 20, vii. 8-10, &c.), charging the people with insincerity in their professions, hypocrisy in their services, and heartlessness in all spiritual things.

53. **DISCOVERY OF COPY OF THE LAW** (2 Kings xxii. 8-28 ; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8—xxxv. 19). Another great work which Josiah undertook was the renovation of the temple at Jerusalem. A royal commission was appointed for the purpose. Contributions for that end had been received by the Levites, not only from the people of Judah themselves, but from Israelitish worshippers as well, and especially from the tribes through which the king had made his personal progress. The commissioners, who were Shaphan, Maaseiah, and Joab, paid over the money to the clerks of work, and they to the workmen. And so great was the faithfulness of the workmen, that it superseded the necessity of auditing the accounts, or resorting to the checks that had been found needful in a former reign. A most important incident occurred during the repairs of the temple. This was the discovery of "the book of the Law of the Lord by the hand of Moses." Hilkiyah coming on a roll of the Law, where it had long lain neglected and forgotten, recognised its worth as a genuine copy of the Law of the Lord—a royal autograph by some pious prince of a past generation, or a temple copy for special sanctuary use, if not the original, and brought it forth from its hiding place, just as Luther in later days came upon the old Latin Bible which had long lain unused in the library of Erfurth. The good king trembled at the word of the Lord, which came to him in this form as a new thing. He consulted Huldah, a prophetess—the first we read of since the days of Deborah, who dwelt in the new or outer city enclosed by Manasseh with a wall to the north of the old city. He convened a great assembly ;

he read to them in the newly discovered treasure ; he pledged them to obedience by a renewal of the old Sinaitic covenant between God and Israel ; he celebrated the Passover on the regular day, the 14th of the first month, and not in the second month, as under Hezekiah. No such Passover had been celebrated "from the days of the Judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the Kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah." Preparations on a scale of unusual grandeur, the magnificence of the royal gifts and of the princes' offerings ; the strictness with which the directions of the law were observed in contrast with previous laxness ; the multitudes that attended, all contributed to the greatness of the occasion. This was the last grand national ceremonial, the last united religious service on the part of Judah and the remnant of Israel before the carrying away to Babylon.

54. WAR WITH NECHO (2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30 ; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-27).—We have no record of the last thirteen years of Josiah's reign. It was in this interval, however, as there is reason to believe, that an invasion of western Asia by Scythian hordes occurred, of which the Greek historian Herodotus informs us. They are referred to in Ezekiel xxxix. 1, as *Rosh* or Russians—the only mention by name of a modern European nation in Old Testament Scripture. But the predicted end was fast approaching, although the pious monarch was himself taken away from the evil to come. The decline of the Assyrian power had been going on for some time. Of this Josiah had taken advantage to extend his sway over the northern kingdom. The fall of the mighty Assyrian monarchy and its magnificent capital Nineveh was effected about the sixteenth year of Josiah's reign, and 625 B.C., by the joint action of Medes and Babylonians, who shared the spoils between them, the Medes under Cyaxares occupying Assyria Proper, and the Babylonians, under Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, retaining Babylonia and its dependent or adjoining pro-

vinces. The transition from Assyrian to Babylonian rule was made under Nabopolassar, whose suzerainty was submitted to by most of the western nations of Asia. Josiah for a time hesitated between the Assyrian, or, properly speaking, the Babylonian and the Egyptian—Nabopolassar and Psammetichus.^a At length, Josiah made common cause with his neighbours, and settled down as a tributary to the Assyro-Babylonian sovereign; and so he remained till B.C. 608. Pharaoh Necho, who had succeeded his father Psammetichus on the throne of Egypt two years before, viz., B.C. 610, undertook an expedition against the King of Assyria (*i.e.*, properly speaking, the King of Babylon, the latter title only coming into use in the subsequent reign of Nebuchadnezzar). Under the impression that the Babylonian power was not yet consolidated, Necho resolved to extend his empire to the Euphrates, and to gain possession of Carchemish, the chief city of northern Syria. Necho's line of march was by the maritime plain or Shephelah and Sharon, the ordinary coast route. But Josiah refused to let him pass through his dominions, and challenged him to battle.^b The battle was fought in the valley below Megiddo, where Josiah had posted his army to attack the head of the Egyptian column as it emerged into the plain. He was mortally wounded by an arrow of an Egyptian archer, and while being conveyed back to Jerusalem, died by the way. His death was deeply deplored by the whole nation publicly, and by each family privately, and even by each individual, as a personal

^a This is referred to by Jeremiah (ii. 18, 36), when he asks, "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river!" And again, "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way! Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria."

^b Whether Necho marched by the maritime plain or, as some suppose, landed his army at Acco or Joppa, intending to proceed thence to the Euphrates, he committed a trespass on the territory of Josiah, who now regarded himself as the representative of the Davidic dynasty.

bereavement. The prophet Jeremiah composed an elegy, not now extant, in which the subjects of King Josiah expressed their grief for his loss.^a The death of Josiah was virtually the end of the kingdom of Judah. It lingered on for two and twenty years indeed, during the short and precarious reigns of four kings—three of them the sons and one of them the grandson of Josiah, but these kings were mere puppets in the hand now of the King of Egypt, again of the monarch of Babylon. The prophets who were contemporary with Josiah were Zephaniah and Habakkuk. The first six chapters at least of Jeremiah also refer to the same period.

Successors of Josiah.

55. SHALLUM (2 Kings xxiii. 30-32; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 1-8). Josiah had four sons, but one of these, Johanan, appears to have died before his father. Of the survivors, Shallum was raised to the throne by the people in preference to his elder brother, under the name of Jehoahaz. He was the last king of the people's choice. After a reign of three months, he was summoned to Riblah, on the Orontes, in the Cælo-Syrian valley, and deposed by Necho, who was then returning from Carchemish, after his victory over the Assyrians.^b Necho's intervention may have been instigated by an appeal from the king's elder brother, who regarded himself as unjustly set aside. At any rate, the Egyptian king imposed a fine of large amount on the people of Judah for exercising the right of choice, and carried their king down to Egypt, from which he never returned, as the prophet Jeremiah had plainly foretold.

^a Some think we have it in the 4th chapter of Lamentations, or in the Book of Lamentations as a whole. At all events, we have a specimen of it in Lamentations iv. 20, "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Jehovah, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow shall we live among the heathen."

^b It was on this occasion he captured, according to Herodotus, the Kadytis, identified by most with Jerusalem, and so called from the epithet *Kodesh*, holy, retained in the present Arabic name EL-KUUDS.

56. ELIAKIM (2 Kings xxiii. 34-xxiv. 5 ; 2 Chr. xxxvi. 4-8). *Jehoiakim* was set on the throne from which his brother had just been deposed. *Jehoiakim* signifies *Jehovah will set up*, the name being changed from *Eliakim*, *God will set up*. Persisting in his Egyptian leanings, in spite of the remonstrances of Jeremiah, *Jehoiakim* occupied the throne by favour of Necho eleven years. In the fourth year of his reign (B.C. 605) an event occurred which had an important effect on the balance of the two great world-powers of this period, and completely turned the scale in favour of Babylon. In that year Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, the most powerful monarch of his race or time, encountered the rival power under Necho at Carchemish. The result was a decisive defeat of Egypt, and the recapture of Carchemish by the Babylonian monarch. All Syria was now open to the arms of Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah celebrates in a triumphal ode this signal victory over Egypt, and predicts the conquest of that land by the same power (Jer. xlii. 1-13). Another consequence was that the Egyptian party had nothing further to hope from Egypt, and "the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land ; for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt." In the previous year—that is to say, the third year of *Jehoiakim*—the same monarch had advanced against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. The actual capture of the city occurred some time in the year after—the same year in which the great victory was gained at the Euphrates. The most memorable circumstance connected with this event was the carrying away to Babylon of Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, better known by their Persian names Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. The Babylonish captivity is usually dated from this period, 605 B.C. ; while in this same year the period of its continuance was an-

nounced by Jeremiah in the words, "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." The boldness and faithfulness of Jeremiah in admonishing the nation, and foretelling its doom; the perils to which he exposed himself; the indignation of priests, and prophets, and people against him; the interposition of the princes or the secular power on his behalf; and his deliverance, mainly due to Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; also the escape of Urijah to Egypt, his extradition, and violent death, are learned from the writings of the prophet Jeremiah. From the same source we gather many other particulars of this reign, such as the famine and drought which were the precursors of sorer sufferings; the sinful neglect of their subjects by the royal family; the desecration of the Sabbath. We learn, too, that the prophet had a roll of his prophecies spreading over three-and-twenty years, even from the thirteenth year of Josiah to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was prepared by his amanuensis Baruch, grandson of Maaseiah, governor of the city in the days of Josiah. And this roll was read by Baruch on a solemn fast-day in the month of December to the people in the court below. It was read again to the princes on their own invitation. It was read a third time by the prince Jehudi before the king, when the king cut it and burned it. It was re-written, however, with additions. Though Jehoiakim had been taken captive in the fourth year of his reign by Nebuchadnezzar, yet on submission he was reinstated in his kingdom. Three years afterwards he made an effort to regain his independence. The great king, who had important engagements elsewhere, left this attempted revolt to be dealt with by the vassal nations—Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites round Judah with "bands of the Chaldeans." The country was harassed, the city surrounded, the king dethroned and made captive. At the end of three years his death closed the sad scene, even usual rites of sepulture being denied him.

57. **SHORT REIGN OF CONIAH** (2 Kings xxiv. 6-16 ; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, 10). His son, Jehoiakim (= *Jehovah will establish*), or Jeconiah (= *Jah will establish*), or Con-iah (= *Jehovah establishes*), succeeded him for the brief space of three months and ten days. At the end of that time the old Egyptian party, being once more dominant and scheming, Nebuchadnezzar appeared before Jerusalem. The surrender of the city and the deposition of the boy king immediately followed. In order to crush the power for further rebellion, all the worth and wealth of the nation were now transferred to Babylon. Seven thousand soldiers ; one thousand smiths or other craftsmen ; princes, priests, and members of the royal family ; the strength of the army, the flower of the nobility, the most serviceable of the artisans—ten thousand in all—were carried away into captivity. Among the captives of distinction were the grandfather of Mordecai, and the prophet Ezekiel, the exile of the Chebar. The treasures of the temple and of the palace went along with them. Only the poorest of the land remained behind. Over this wretched wreck of a kingdom the youngest son of Josiah, and uncle of Jehoiakim, was made king.

58. **ZEDEKIAH REIGNS AS VASSAL OF BABYLON.** (2 Kings xxiv. 17-20 ; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11-13).—Zedekiah (= *Jehovah righteousness*), whose name had been Mattaniah, was the twentieth and last King of Judah. For eleven years he held a barren sceptre, as vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. In his reign Jerusalem fell after a siege of two years and a half ; and the work of destruction was completed by the Chaldean army amid the exultation of the neighbouring nations, who having envied Judah in her prosperity, rejoiced in her fall. The events of this reign prior to the destruction of the city are soon summed up. Jeremiah counselled submission as the only means of safety. This rendered him unpopular, but did not prove him to be unpatriotic. He saw that the temporary supremacy of the Chal-

dean power was in accordance with the will of God, and that seventy years must elapse before the return from captivity. Accordingly he wrote a letter (Jer. xxix.) to the captives already carried away with Jeconiah, urging them to accept the inevitable in their position. The anti-Babylonian party formed the majority, and received encouragement from the false prophets both at home and abroad. Hanaiah broke the symbolic yoke of wood off the neck of Jeremiah, but the latter foretold that the yoke of wood would be replaced by a yoke of iron. To Hanaiah himself he delivered the solemn warning, "This year thou shalt die;" while Shemaiah wrote from Babylon, urging the priests to punish Jeremiah for predicting seventy years' captivity. Zedekiah visited Babylon (Jer. li.) no doubt in the capacity of a vassal, and, as appears from Ezekiel xvii., took an oath of submission to the King of Babylon. But his eye was fixed on Egypt, and having entered into a secret compact with Hophra, a successor of Necho, he "rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God." From the mention of ambassadors assembled at Jerusalem (Jer. xxviii. 3) out of the adjoining kingdoms, the formation of an anti-Chaldean league is inferred. Accordingly, in the seventh year of his reign, Zedekiah rebelled, and the Egyptian party enjoyed a short-lived triumph. Two years after, when Nebuchadnezzar led an army, composed of Chaldeans and auxiliaries from the neighbouring nations, to besiege Jerusalem, Hophra marched to the help of his ally, and caused a diversion in his favour. The Babylonian king raised the siege, withdrew from Jerusalem, and went to meet him. The Egyptian king, alarmed by the strength of the Chaldean army, retreated into his own land. Soon the siege was renewed, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold. The light of a delusive hope had, however, in the meantime, sprung up, and an act at once of bad faith and bad policy had been perpetrated. The solemn promise of manumission of

the Hebrew slaves was revoked, and an accession of strength was thus lost to the nation. In vain did Jeremiah protest against the false dealing in the one case, and the false hope in the other. At length, weary of remonstrating with his headstrong countrymen, he resolved to retire to his native Anathoth. But he was not to reach the rest he sought. Passing through the city gate he was arrested as a deserter to the camp of the Chaldeans, brought back and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan, the scribe. His prison life, which at first had been somewhat lightened at the king's command, was soon made more bitter than ever. On several occasions the king consulted the prophet, but received no encouragement, or was advised to submit. On one of these occasions he sent Pashur and Zephaniah, but the prophet strongly urged surrender as the only chance of safety. Then at the instigation of the princes, he was cast into the dungeon or deep pit, where he sank in the mire. Out of this he was delivered through the kind intervention of the Ethiopian Eunuch Ebed-melech. During his imprisonment the prophet exercised the right of redemption by purchasing the field of a relative in Anathoth, to show his faith in the re-possession of the land after the expiry of the Babylonish captivity. It was also during his imprisonment that he delivered the series of predictions contained in the 33rd chapter of his book, and which are as sublime as they are solacing. Here, notwithstanding the desolation of the land, he prophesies the return from captivity, the rebuilding of the cities, the restoration of prosperity, the coming of a righteous king, and an everlasting priesthood.

59. HIS FATE. (2 Kings xxvi. ; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-21).—After the siege had been pressed with vigour for two years and a half, with the exception of the brief diversion caused by Hophra, a breach was made in the city wall on the ninth day of the fourth month. This was the date of the city's capture. Thereupon, Zedekiah with his court and royal

guard fled by the garden gate of the palace on the south side of the city, and, crossing the Mount of Olives, made for the Jordan valley. He was overtaken in the descent upon the plains of Jericho by the Chaldeans, who carried him to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. There his sons were slain before his face, his own eyes put out, and he himself carried away in chains of brass a captive to Babylon, thus fulfilling the twofold and seemingly contradictory prophecy (1) that he would see Nebuchadnezzar and be carried to Babylon ; (2) that he should go to Babylon and not see it. Scarce a month after, on the seventh day of the fifth month, Nebuzaradan, commander-in-chief, in execution of his master's stern command, reduced the city, the temple, the palace, every great man's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, to a heap of charred ruins. The remaining treasures of city and temple, including the two pillars of the temple porch, Jachin and Boaz, were among the spoils of the conqueror. The chief officers of state and high priest Seraiah, with the second priest Zephaniah were put to death. Jeremiah having been allowed his choice between going to Babylon, and staying in the now desolate land, preferred the latter alternative. The Jews who remained in their land had Gedaliah appointed over them as governor or satrap under the King of Babylon, with the seat of government at Mizpeh. The mixed feelings called forth by this catastrophe are indicated by the various expressions used. The Edomites said, "Raze it! raze it! even to the foundation thereof;" the Ammonites said, "Aha against the sanctuary when it was profaned;" Moab and Seir, "Behold the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen." Jeremiah, according to the heading of the Book of Lamentations in the LXX., "sat down and wept, and lamented his lamentation over Jerusalem." We may safely say, "never did city suffer a more miserable fate, never was ruined city lamented in language so exquisitely pathetic."

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Manasseh's reign is remarkable in two respects in the annals of Judah.*
2. *Specify how far the reaction reached in his reign.*
3. *Manasseh committed a threefold offence against the worship of Jehovah.*
4. *Show, by references to Jeremiah and Zephaniah, the state of things in Manasseh's reign.*
5. *A single recorded prediction belongs to his reign; quote the words of it.*
6. *Who led Manasseh captive to Babylon? What salutary effect did his exile there produce on him?*
7. *How many verses of Scripture comprise the history of this long reign? Why so few?*
8. *What picture does a prophet give of the character of Amon's short reign?*
9. *Whose training did Josiah enjoy? What was the turning-point in the young king's history?*
10. *Name the best kings in Jewish history.*
11. *What old prophecy was fulfilled by Josiah, and how?*
12. *With three classes of priests he dealt differently.*
13. *What event in modern times resembled Hilkiak's discovery of a roll of the Law?*
14. *In what respects did the Passover in Josiah's reign surpass all preceding ones?*
15. *What reasons may be assigned for Josiah's war with Necho?*
16. *Specify the most important events in the short subsequent history of the kingdom of Judah.*
17. *With what feelings was the downfall of the kingdom of Judah received by the neighbouring peoples?*

CHAPTER X.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
THE PROPHETS.

60. THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS HOW FAR AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE. The function of a prophet was to give inspired instruction as well as to foretell future events. The prophets Elijah and Elisha had been distinguished for their works of wonder, the prophets of a later time for their words of power ; the former for their miracles, the latter for their writings. In those writings we get a tolerably clear insight into the spirit of the times, the character of the people, the stirring events of the day, the nation's sins and the nation's sufferings. One of the earliest prophetical books of the sacred canon is generally supposed to be that of Jonah, the earliest prophetic writer of the southern kingdom is held by the large majority to be Joel, who flourished probably early in Uzziah's reign. By his writings, as by those of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, we are helped to a right apprehension of the bearing and course of events in their time. As the ministry of Amos and Hosea mainly respected the northern kingdom, we cannot expect so much help from them in relation to the state of matters in Judah. Incidentally, however, we do benefit by their allusions to the southern kingdom, and by relations common to both kingdoms. Occasionally they turn aside and cast a glance towards Judah.

61. JOEL'S REFERENCE TO THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS IN THE REIGN OF UZZIAH. According to Joel's description, their appearance was that of horses, their rapid motion that of horsemen, the whirring of their wings like the noise of chariots. Marching in rank they were irresistible, no place was inaccessible to them, and no spot free from their

assault. "They shall run to and fro," says the prophet, "in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses, they shall enter in at the windows." The havock they made was fearful; the fruit trees were destroyed. "The purple vine, the green fig-tree, the grey olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron, vanished before them, and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth." Next to the fruit trees the cereals—corn, and wheat, and barley, and other grain were ruined. Not only the herbs for the service of man were eaten up, the grass for the cattle perished so that the herds had no pasture. The plague of locusts was accompanied with drought; according to the record both of Joel and Amos. While Joel in the second chapter of his prophecies speaks of this invasion of locusts as future, Amos, in his fourth chapter, refers to it as past, for he there speaks of this calamity as one of the visitations of the Almighty for the purpose of turning a wayward people to repentance. The relative period at which they flourished may be dated accordingly—Joel being thus some time prior to Amos.

62. CHRONOLOGICAL RECKONINGS. The reigns of Uzziah and Jotham taken together cover a long period, and the writings of the prophets shed much additional light on the transactions, circumstances, and character of that period, as also on the spirit of those times. The reign of Uzziah, extending to fifty-two years, and that of Jotham to sixteen additional years, make up a period of sixty-eight years, or only seven years less than three quarters of a century. It was in the reign of Uzziah the Greek era of chronology began, the first Olympiad dating from 776 B.C. The Hebrew and Greek nationalities are brought into contact—unpleasant contact, it is true—by Joel, the prophet of this period, who flourished, there is reason to believe, not later than

the first decade of Uzziah's reign, in the following words :—"The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border." Likewise in the reign of Jotham the Roman era commenced, for Rome was founded 753 B.C. Henceforth greater certainty, it may be presumed, with regard to the relation of the Jews to other peoples is thus ascertainable.

63. ERA OF PROPHETIC ACTIVITY. This period is also distinguished in another way—it forms a new era of active prophetic ministry, especially in the kingdom of Judah, where, during the decline of the kingdom of Israel, the prophets exercised with fresh vigour their prophetic office. While there may be difficulty or doubt in fixing the exact time at which others entered on their prophetic career or flourished, we have an explicit declaration which leaves no room for doubt with regard to the time of the greatest prophet of the period—the evangelical Isaiah. In addition to the opening statement of his book about "the vision which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," we have the express declaration of the prophet himself that the divine intimation of his call to, and initiation in, the prophetic office took place "in the year that King Uzziah died." Hosea was Isaiah's contemporary during the same four kings' reign, but began his prophetic career earlier than Isaiah, and continued it for the long period of sixty years. Amos also began before Isaiah but in the same king's reign, two years, as already remarked, before the earthquake, and some time prior to Hosea. Hosea and even Amos (though of Tekoa in Judah) both prophesied to Israel. Joel preceded them, while Micah came after them. The latter commenced to prophesy in the reign of Jotham, and continued to do so during that reign and the two succeeding, that is to say, during the reigns of Jotham Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Farther, Joel, Isaiah, and Micah exercised their office in the southern kingdom. Thus numerous rays of light coming from different quarters converge on this period.

64. **STATE OF RELIGION.** While the historical books only give a general intimation here and there about the state of religion and morality, the prophetic writings exhibit the same with minute particularity and full detail. The condition of matters in this respect seems to have been one of gradual deterioration. Thus in Chronicles we read that after the accession of Jotham and the enforced abdication of his father "the people did yet corruptly;" again we read in reference to Jotham's reign that "the high places"—those irregular sanctuaries—"were not removed." "Ah! sinful nation," exclaims the prophet Isaiah in relation to the same period or thereabouts, "a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters." Half a century of comparative peace and prosperity had been enjoyed, but this time of rest and repose, instead of producing thankfulness, and their security during this period, instead of being improved, had been misused in sinful indulgences and idolatrous practices. Riches had increased, their land was full of wealth, and their treasures were without limit; commerce flourished, ships of Tarshish spread their sails on different and distant seas, carrying on a lucrative trade; piles of buildings were reared, architecture had raised high towers and fenced walls; works of art and pleasant pictures were eagerly sought and secured at any price; they had their groves and their gardens, they delighted in their trees of beauty and of strength—the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan.

But amid this great material prosperity, moral corruption pervaded all classes and conditions—the high and the low alike, the old and the young, male and female. Bribery had found its way to the seat of judgment, and perverted the decisions of the judge;

the weak and the defenceless were oppressed, men ground the faces of the poor. The princes or nobles robbed God and wronged man—they were rebellious and companions of thieves. Avarice and self-aggrandisement were manifest in their joining house to house and field to field. The base bore themselves in an unseemly manner against the honourable, nor did youth respect age. Pride prevailed universally—the haughtiness of man and the high looks could not be mistaken ; while the vanity and voluptuousness of the females did more than keep pace with the pomp of men. Drunkenness had become a national vice—they were mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. In carousals they spent the day, their drunken revels they continued into the night. The worst of all perhaps was their besotted and persistent idolatry. And, notwithstanding all this, there was a hollow profession of religion and a heartless observance of outward forms.

65. THE COMING JUDGMENTS. No wonder the storm of divine wrath was gathering and the tempest of the divine judgments was ready to burst over them. Joel warned them in his day by what had already come, and of what was coming. He called them not to soulless services, but to real repentance, saying, “Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.” Amos, though ministering mainly to Israel, has a word of warning for his own country Judah. “Woe to them,” he says, “that are at ease in Zion.” Hosea pictures the struggle in the heart of the paternal God, as embracing Judah and Israel alike—the parent’s compassionate nature in severe conflict with the dire necessity for chastising wayward and rebellious children, when he exclaims, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?” And again, in tones of tender pity, he adds, “Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”

66. CONSOLATIONS FOR THE PENITENT.

Yet all these prophets, looking away beyond the long dark interval of sin and suffering, comfort their countrymen by pointing onward to a good time coming, when the fallen tabernacle of David would be raised up, and the breaches thereof closed up, and it would be built as in the days of old ; when the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh ; when the mountain of the Lord's house would be established on the top of the mountains, be exalted above the hills, and all nations flow unto it. Micah, born in Moresheth Gath, includes his native village among the ten towns of the maritime plain with which he began his ministry, and the names of which in themselves, or by contrast, indicate their doom, for example, "In the house of Aphrah (= *dust*) roll thyself in the dust ;" but he directs his warnings mainly to the two capitals of Samaria and Jerusalem. He denounces their idolatry, injustice, and oppression ; the cruelty of the princes, and the falsehood of the prophets ; while the usual cycle of sin, punishment, and pardon repeats itself. Zion was to be ploughed like a field, yet the law was to go forth out of Zion. In their prosperity the people trusted in themselves, at a later period their confidence was in foreign aid, the prophets directed them to trust in neither, but in God. As might be expected of contemporaries, Isaiah and Micah have much in common. The former cheers by the prospect of a Saviour born of a virgin ; the latter names the place of his birth. Both, shaping their predictions in a form at once similar and most suitable for consolation amid present disorders and approaching distress, foretell the time when the knowledge of God and obedience to His laws shall go hand in hand, when peace shall be universal, the weapons of war being re-formed into implements of husbandry, and the utmost tranquillity shall be enjoyed. As a pledge of such blessings in the future, the prophets not unfrequently

fall back on the deliverances of other days, comparing former and future mercies. Thus Micah blends the history of God's gracious dealings in the past with bright visions of the future. The closing words of his prophecy allude at once to his own name (= who is like Jehovah) as symbolical, and to the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea as significant of spiritual deliverance: "*Who is a God like unto Thee?*" he asks, and then he unfolds the benefits implied, "that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." So in the Song of Moses, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods? *Who is like Thee*, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? . . . Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed." Again, "He will subdue our iniquities," our greatest enemies—worse than Pharaoh and his Egyptians to Israel; "and Thou wilt *cast* all their sins *into the depths of the sea*;" so in the Song, "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He *cast into the sea . . . the depths* have covered them." In this way the past and present, or past and future, are beautifully interwoven in the dealings of God's providence and the dispensations of His grace. Future mercies, moreover, are thus reflected in the mirror of the past, and imaged by men and movements that had become matter of history, for instance, mercy by Abraham, truth by Jacob, deliverance by coming up out of the land of Egypt, guidance by the shepherd of Israel—the good shepherd feeding his flock in Bashan and Gilead, and the frustration of enemies by Balak and Balaam.

67. A TRADITION ABOUT JOTHAM. A tradition relating to Jotham, which, while it briefly sketches the other Kings of Judah, eulogises him in contrast with and in preference to all the rest, is found in an old Rabbinic commentary, and is as follows:—"David sinned in the matter of Uriah the

Hittite, Solomon's wives turned away his heart, Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, Abijah walked in all the sins of his father, Asa took gold and silver out of the treasures of the Lord's house, and imprisoned a prophet, Jehoshaphat made alliance with the wicked, Jehoram slew his brethren, Ahaziah's mother was his counsellor to do evil, Joash slew Zechariah, Amaziah worshipped the gods of Seir, Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense, Ahaz walked in the ways of the King of Israel, and made images to Baalim, Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, and there was wrath upon him, and for three things they do not praise him, Manasseh did evil in the sight of the Lord, Josiah did not hearken to the words of Necho from the mouth of the Lord, Zedekiah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not humble himself in the presence of Jeremiah; but in Jothan no fault is found." Such is the tradition, which is not without instruction, though we of course discredit its extravagant praise of Jotham, for there are only three Kings of Judah, of each of whom it is affirmed in an unqualified manner, "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did;" and these three were Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

68. FURTHER REFERENCES IN MICAH. To the child-sacrifice of Ahaz the prophet Micah appears to allude in his earnest and eloquent remonstrance, in which, after denying the sufficiency of thousands of rams for an oblation, or of thousands of rivers of oil for a libation, he proceeds to ask, "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah, moreover, had denounced most unsparingly different classes and their sins—the princes as oppressive, the priests as mercenary, the prophets as unfaithful, and all of them as perverting the prophet Isaiah's pledge of Immanuel, saying, "Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." The precursor of all the reforms

in the succeeding reign of Hezekiah was, in all probability, a prediction of this same prophet Micah, which the elders quoted in vindication of Jeremiah (Jer. xxvi. 18, 19), "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts : Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah King of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them?"

69. PROMISED CONTINUITY OF DAVID'S LINE. When the confederates set themselves to subvert the dynasty of David and depose the Davidic King, they sought to make void the purpose of God, and in consequence signally failed. The faithless King of Judah declined the proffered sign under pretext of not tempting God, whereas on his part it was a practical refusal to trust God or be bound to His service by any tie. As a sure token to confirm the continuity of David's royal line, Isaiah promised the descent of King Immanuel in that line, and even through the family of the apostate Ahaz ; while the miraculous birth of that Messiah would console and comfort all the faithful of future times. The kingdoms of Syria and Israel would be destroyed, and even that of Judah greatly depressed ; but the stability of David's throne, guaranteed by covenant promise, would be secured. A state of desolation was indeed to ensue, pasturage would take the place of tillage, and natural products would sustain the people ; but the kingdom of David, rising out of weakness and want, would take a new departure in the person of Immanuel. Moreover, while the promise of Immanuel was a pledge of God's unchanging mercy to the house of David, Isaiah gives another sign for the then present distress and pressing calamities. He pledges his prophetic word that before his infant

son, called by the significant name of *Mahe-shalal-Hash-baz*, that is, *Plunder-hasteth-Spoil-speedeth*, would be old enough to distinguish his parents, "the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria would be taken away before the King of Assyria." The deliverance was to come unexpectedly, and as the prophet had previously declared (vii. 17-20) from that distant land.

In many stirring events of Hezekiah's reign, the prophetic pictures of Isaiah had a historical background. A reference to a few of these shall be embodied in the concluding questions of this chapter.

70. PREDICTIONS OF ZEPHANIAH IN RELATION TO JUDAH. Zephaniah, *Jehovah's watchman*, as the name imports, looking out with prophetic eye into the future, sees the gathering gloom and the dreadful day of divine wrath near at hand. His description of the day of coming judgment has not only suggested, but furnished to some extent material for, the well-known thrilling Latin hymn, *Dies Iræ, Dies Illa*, "that day of wrath, that dreadful day." The Vulgate rendering of the fifteenth verse of the first chapter of Zephaniah supplies the commencement of the hymn; that verse is the key-note of this prophet's predictions, and in the English version reads thus:—"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness." In the first chapter of his book the prophet foretells in vivid and terrible language the judgments that were just about to overtake Judah and Jerusalem—the heathen priests that worshipped the host of heaven; the half-hearted priests that halted between Jehovah and Baal, now swearing to the Lord, again by Malcham, that is, Baal, *their King*; the apostates that turned back from the Lord, being renegades from true religion; and those who did not seek the Lord, and so had no religion. He resumes the subject in his third chapter,

and pronounces a bitter woe against the sins of the city and of all classes in the same—people, princes, prophets, priests, all of whom had corrupted their way, and prepared themselves for the storm of wrath that was soon to overwhelm them.

71. PREDICTIONS AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF JUDAH. These included judgments against the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Cushites, and Assyrians. Four of the five chief cities of Philistia he mentions by name, and by a beautiful paronomasia describes their doom; thus, 'azzah 'azzubah, Gaza shall be forsaken; *ekron teaker*, Ekron shall be rooted up. Nineveh was still standing, and so we infer that Zephaniah prophesied in the early part of Josiah's reign, and before any revival of religion had taken place. But the approaching doom of that great city Nineveh is depicted in dark and dreadful colours. Yet gloomy as are these and other predictions of this prophet, he does not close his prophecies in gloom, but predicts a glorious future in which Jew and Gentile shall share alike. To the Gentile peoples he will turn "a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord;" while the remnant of his people Israel he will make "a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth."

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR INQUIRY.

1. *Give proofs from Isaiah of Hezekiah's literary ability.*
2. *In what chapter specially does he refer to the water supply of Jerusalem secured by Hezekiah's great waterworks?*
3. *Where does he speak of the crash of mighty cedars and the upspringing of a young shoot? and what is the reference?*
4. *What chapter contains an ode of triumph over the fallen monarchs of Assyria and Babylon?*
5. *Whose military operations are referred to in chap.*

xxix. ? who was the broken rod of chap. xxx. ? and what party is rebuked in chap. xxxi. ?

6. To what is the defender of Israel likened in chap. xxx. ? and to what in chap. xxxi. ?

7. Where is it foretold that the people would be sustained by the spontaneous growth of one year and the aftergrowth of the next ?

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

(As given in A.V. of Bible.)

Name.	Date of Accession B.C.	Duration of Reign.
Rehoboam, . . .	975	17 years.
Abijam, . . .	957	3 "
Asa, . . .	955	41 "
Jehoshaphat, . . .	914	25 "
Jehoram, . . .	889	8 "
Ahaziah, . . .	885	1 "
Athaliah, . . .	884	6 "
Jehoash, . . .	878	40 "
Amaziah, . . .	838	29 "
Uzziah, . . .	810	52 "
Jotham, . . .	758	16 "
Ahaz, . . .	742	16 "
Hezekiah, . . .	726	29 "
Manasseh, . . .	698	55 "
Amon, . . .	643	2 "
Josiah, . . .	641	31 "
Shallum, . . .	610	3 months.
Jehoiakim, . . .	610	11 years.
Coniah, . . .	599	3 months.
Zedekiah, . . .	599	11 years.
The carrying away to Babylon, . . .	588	

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